

Jonathan Gilmour & Doug Levandowski

KIDS ON BIKES

2ND EDITION



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CREATED BY

Jon Gilmour and Doug Levandowski

PUBLISHED BY

HUNTERS
ENTERTAINMENT

CREDITS

GAME DESIGN

Jon Gilmour and Doug Levandowski

ART

Sara Vonogas, Marifer Pagola, Andy Gruba, Heather Vaughn, Monica Magana, Hali Fisher, Fabian Lelay

COVER ART

Caleb Cleveland

CONSULTATION ON COLLABORATIVE PLAY AND ADDITIONAL WRITING

Kate Bullock

CULTURAL CONSULTANT

James Mendez Hodes

LAYOUT DESIGN

Diana Sousa

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Matthias Bonnici

ADDITIONAL CONTENT READING

Nick Sauer

PARTNER, HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT

Christopher J. De La Rosa

PARTNER, HEAD OF PUBLISHING

Ivan Van Norman

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, GENERAL MANAGER

Noxweiler Ignatius Berf

COMMUNITY DIRECTOR

Markeia McCarty

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Benjamin Dunn,
Michelle Nguyen Bradley

ART DIRECTORS

Caleb Cleveland & Alex Teplitz

MARKETING ASSOCIATE

Indrani Ganguly

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

Fabienne Miskelly & Sloan Smith

EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Alex Teplitz,
Noxweiler Ignatius Berf

HUNTERS
ENTERTAINMENT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: GETTING READY TO RIDE TOGETHER

PAGE 1

CHAPTER 2: WORLD BUILDING

PAGE 20

CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER CREATION

PAGE 24

CHAPTER 4: PLAYING THE GAME

PAGE 43

CHAPTER 5: POWERED CHARACTERS

PAGE 64

CHAPTER 6: BIKE MAINTENANCE

PAGE 74

CHAPTER 7: INFORMATION FOR THE GM

PAGE 75

THE HORROR IN THE HOUSE ON HOOK HILL

PAGE 112

APPENDICES

PAGE 154

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PAGE 180

KIDS ON BIKES

The halls of the school are nearly silent. You try to keep your steps as small and controlled as possible. As you grip your flashlights tightly, the only noise you hear is the hum of circulating heat. Instinctively, you hold your breath as you approach an intersection. You don't know if you're alone in the building. With your backs pressed against the lockers closest to the intersection, you wait, listen. You think you hear breathing around the corner, but maybe it's your mind playing tricks on you. You hope it is...

*In *Kids on Bikes*, you and your friends will play everyday people encountering strange, scary, and otherworldly forces that you can't comprehend, much less overpower. Working with—not against—the GM, you'll collaborate to tell your story. But in order to survive them, your characters will need to work together, use their strengths, and know when they have to run and hide.*

Note: *We've written the first 6 chapters of the book with the players in mind, so anyone planning to play would benefit from reading those. The later chapters, starting on page 75, are intended for anyone planning to be the GM, or "game master," for the game. While they won't spoil anything for players, they're more than you need to be a character in *Kids on Bikes*.*

CHAPTER 1: GETTING READY TO RIDE TOGETHER

In a world of unspeakable horrors, working together is the only way forward. In *Kids on Bikes*, people come together to solve terrifying mysteries and stop the unknown from entering our world. And as players and facilitators, we come together to tell these stories. This chapter is about setting up an out-of-game experience that creates an incredible in-game experience. Here you'll find everything you need to know about playing *Kids on Bikes* before you roll up a character or create the first monster.

BEFORE YOU HIT THE ROAD

The preparation we do before we even pick up our dice creates a baseline for how we expect each other to behave and how our game will go. These steps ensure everyone stays on the same path, has their brakes ready, and knows where we're racing to. Hosting a session before you jump into fully playing the game, often called "Session Zero," is a good way to go through everything you need to. Think about it like checking your bikes out before a long ride. Skip a step with your bikes and you're liable to have a chain pop off or realize that you forgot to bring snacks. Skip a step in Session Zero and you might run into trouble with your group.

Some groups will run this Session Zero online before meeting up, either with a video or audio chat or just in text. However you do it, it's vital that you cover everything in the checklist on the next page and answer all questions that everyone has about the game. Doing this will give you the tools to tell a story that's great for everyone.

If you can't do a Session Zero because you're running a one shot and have made pregenerated characters, heavily rely on your Road Signals and your content warnings. Still go through the checklist below, as they'll still need all this information.



SESSION 0 CHECKLIST

This checklist serves as a quick guide to the stages that you'll discuss during Session Zero. For most of the items on the list, we'll go into more detail about how to approach these conversations in later pages, indicated next to each item on the checklist.

- **Introductions:** If you don't already know everyone you're playing with, take time to introduce yourselves. Give them the name you want to be called and your pronouns, and make sure you know the same for everyone at the table.
- **Tone:** The GM will facilitate a discussion about the tone of the game.
- **Content & Consent Checklist:** The GM will remind everyone of the possible content warnings for this game and will go over the results from the Pre-Game Form so that you know what is and isn't on the table for the group.
- **Marginalized Groups & "Historical Accuracy":** Similarly, when playing in an earlier time when many marginalized groups were even more marginalized, it's important to make sure that everyone is still able to have fun at the table. The GM will make sure that your group addresses how to best handle that.
- **Characters' Ages:** When playing in a game with characters who aren't yet adults, it's important to keep some things in mind. The GM will make sure you're all on the same page about what this means for your game.
- **Road Signals:** You'll go over these verbal tools and make sure everyone knows how to use them.
- **Character Romance & Intimacy:** The GM will facilitate a conversation about relationships and romance in the game. Everyone will share their expectations for their characters.
- **Town Creation:** As a group, you'll establish details about the town that your game will take place in.
- **Character Creation:** Finally, you'll create both your characters and their relationships to each other by selecting Tropes and answering questions.



SETTING EXPECTATIONS & ESTABLISHING TONE

Getting everyone on the same page starts by agreeing on what you can all expect. Every game and campaign of *Kids on Bikes* is unique, so doing this is essential to create the kind of experience you're hoping to create.

Kids on Bikes can emulate several aspects of the genre. It can be a game about literal kids on bikes investigating weird things while adults ignore them, about a family trying to find a missing loved one, or about members of a town working together to survive something sinister. It can involve high action, high investigation, high interpersonal drama, or any combination thereof. It's completely up to your group.

Because of that flexibility, you'll need to work together to establish the kind of experience you want before the dice start rolling. What kind of game are you envisioning? What movie or television touchstones do you want to evoke? What sorts of characters do you want to play?

Then, based on what you all want, you'll establish the game's tone. When discussing this, you're talking about an expectation of what will happen in the story and how you think characters and the world should be portrayed. Setting the tone ahead of time will let everyone know what kind of beats you're trying to hit, what kind of behavior is expected, and what they should be aiming for in terms of roleplaying style.

A serious game will have fewer comedic or goofy moments. A light-hearted game may rely heavily on comedy or unrealistic action. A dark or gritty game may have more horrific or upsetting elements. Refer back to the movie and TV touchstones to make sure everyone understands and agrees upon your tone.

Beyond how serious the game is, you should also talk with the table about how realistic, fantastical, or absurd the world is. Do you expect strange things to happen because of a mystical force while everything else seems normal? Is everything in the town a little bit off? How different is the history of this world from our own? This discussion will allow you all to better navigate the landscape your characters will inhabit.



Finally, you need to talk about the expectations around action level. Will this game be a high-action, guns-blazing game? Will it be mostly focused on investigation? Will it be a horror game? Discuss what everyone wants, or what you've decided ahead of time, to ensure everyone really understands what story you're about to tell.

Remember, tone is important because it helps everyone have the same notes on how their characters should act and behave, what kind of comedy and action is and isn't on the table, and what you should be focused on. It's getting a chance to describe the book jacket of a book you're about to read and using the back copy to let you know what you're in for.

DISCUSSING HORROR

Horror is its own special kind of conversation, because what everyone finds frightening is different. Horror also has a selection of sub-genres that help us talk about what kind of things might happen. Horror can mean jump scares, psychological terror, being stalked or chased, gore, torture, or intense suffering of the characters. Make sure you discuss what kind of horror your game is aiming for.

Most *Kids on Bikes* games will focus on monster fiction and mystery solving. This means the characters will see upsetting or terrifying things, but you'll only confront the source of those things in peak moments of a story. Most of the time, they'll be seeing the residual effects of creatures, monsters, and government agencies. The threat of bigger horrors will often play into the tension, with the goal being to prevent those greater threats from becoming reality.

Some games may veer more towards monster hunting, but the genre generally mixes fear, creeping doom, monsters, and psychological horror. Terrible things happen, sometimes to the world around the characters and sometimes to the characters themselves.

Whatever you're interested in, part of discussing tone is discussing what you're thinking for the horror content. You don't need to reveal what kind of monsters, just what they do. You don't need to say what kind of body horror, just that it's on the table. Ask questions to clarify anything you don't understand, and be honest with your responses.

Once you've established all of these things, the GM will explain the game in a few sentences. They'll say this out loud to you and ask if that sounds like what you're wanting to play. It could look something like this:

Our game will be a creepy mystery solving game set in the near past where we play townspeople, including kids, teens, and adults, who are impacted by the town's frightening secrets. We'll work together to puzzle out what's happening, drive the story forward with our characters, and see if we can survive what goes bump in the night. The horror we'll include will be mostly suspense and dread rather than gore and jump scares.

CONTENT WARNINGS & PRE-GAME FORM

Almost every story you tell has the potential to include content that will make someone uncomfortable or upset. Some people are totally up for being uncomfortable, but for others, it can ruin the experience. The goal of content warnings is to ensure everyone knows what they're in for without spoiling the mystery. It also lets people say no to content that they're not comfortable playing with.

Use the Pre-Game Form (which can be found in **Appendix A - Pre-Game Form** on page 112) to let your GM know what you want to keep out of the game. This will help you, your fellow players, and the GM create the best experience for everyone at the table.

To use the Pre-Game Form, players will make note of elements that they want to keep out of the game and elements they'd like to be asked about before they are included. Each player and the GM should complete a Pre-Game Form by doing the following:

- ~ For content that you'd be excited to see in the game, add it to the *Wish List* with an exclamation point next to it. This will let the GM and the other players know elements you're excited to include.
- ~ For content you don't want described in detail or roleplayed but that you're comfortable having referenced, add it to the *With Care List* with the dash next to it.
- ~ For content you want to be asked about before including, add it to the *Content Warning List* with the question mark next to it.
- ~ For content you don't want to appear or be referenced in the game, add it to the *Detour List* with the X marked beside it.
- ~ If there are other elements you don't initially include on your Pre-Game form, you can add them later to your sheet or communicate them to your GM using the same notation system as above."

The GM will then privately compile their list and all of the players' lists into a single reference document for the table to share. To start, any content with an X next to it is removed from play entirely. This means you don't have it happen off screen, on screen, or even mentioned in jokes. It is a hard line for someone, so you'll keep it off the table entirely.



For any content with a check mark beside it, you'll ask before adding it to play. If the GM plans something that touches on that content for a session, they will name it as a content warning before that session begins. (By "session," we mean a day when you and your friends are playing *Kids on Bikes*.) It also means that if anyone at the table plans on adding that content in the middle of play, they pause and ask if it's okay to go down that road before continuing play. Anyone wanting to add that content can simply say "Hey, I want to add this content in this way. Everyone okay?" If anyone says no, then the game proceeds without the content. We'll address more about how to pause the game in "Road Signals" on page 12.

Once you've established that content, you'll discuss elements that you're excited to have in the game. Some of these might be content from the list while others could be content that's not on there. Going around the table, each player should share at least one element that you'd like to see in the game—but you may share as many as you like. If someone mentions content that you'd be excited to have in the game, too, make sure to let everyone know. The more people who are excited about something, the more the GM will try to include it. However, if any players want to avoid content, that supersedes any players' interest in including it.

The GM will add this to the section on the Pre-Game Form. During your games, it will be visible on the table for all players to refer to so that everyone is clear on what content to avoid entirely, what content to check in about before including, and what content to try to include.

UPDATING THE DETOUR LIST

As you play the game, you'll encounter content that people hit the brakes on. When this happens, the GM will ask if you want it gone from the game forever or just for today and will add anything removed permanently to the Detour List.

By the same token, as you're playing, players might realize content that they'd like to include in the game. When that happens, add it to the Wish List for everyone to see easily. There isn't an exhaustive list of content warnings available, as triggers are unknowable and unpredictable by their very nature, but easy access to this list will help set people up for success, especially if you're playing with more horrific story material.

To ensure that everyone playing is still comfortable with the contents of the Detour List, before each session, review any changes that were made to the list in the last session. (For example, "Last week, we added 'spiders' to the Detour List. Just a reminder to avoid that!") Then, check to see if anyone wants to add anything to the Detour List. Finally, after reviewing what you want to avoid, go over what you want to lean into. Read the Wish List out

loud, and ask players if there's anything they want to add to it before you start playing.

Based on the media that players often draw from to inspire their stories, here's a non-exhaustive list of possible content warnings (also included in **Appendix B - Possible Content Warnings** on page 155).

- ~ Abandonment
- ~ Ableism
- ~ Alcohol use
- ~ Alien abduction
- ~ Body horror
- ~ Bugs
- ~ Bullying
- ~ Car or bike accidents
- ~ Classism
- ~ Domestic violence
- ~ Drug use
- ~ Eating disorders
- ~ Emotional violence
- ~ Fat shaming
- ~ Gaslighting
- ~ Gendered swearing
- ~ Gore
- ~ Harm to animals
- ~ Harm to children and young adults
- ~ Hate speech
- ~ Homelessness
- ~ Homophobia
- ~ Hospitals
- ~ Human experimentation
- ~ Human sacrifice
- ~ Incarceration
- ~ Kidnapping
- ~ Loss or death of a loved one
- ~ Medical conditions/procedures
- ~ Mutilation
- ~ Négllect
- ~ Parental punishment
- ~ Permanent injuries
- ~ Physical violence
- ~ Police brutality
- ~ Police presence
- ~ Powerlessness
- ~ Racism
- ~ Religious persecution
- ~ Self-harm / Suicidal ideation
- ~ Sexism
- ~ Sexual assault
- ~ Sexual harassment
- ~ Social ostracization
- ~ Stalking
- ~ Torture
- ~ Transphobia

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

Kids on Bikes is played in a historical time period. As part of your discussions during Session Zero, make sure to cover a few key aspects surrounding this.

First, have a conversation about how accurate you want to make the historical details of the game. Chances are, nobody wants to be at a table with someone who keeps saying things like, “Well, technically, our game takes place in the summer of 1993, so your character couldn’t be obsessed with *The X-Files*. It hasn’t been released yet!” On the other hand, some of you might want to have that level of verisimilitude. Have a conversation about how accurate you want the historical details of your setting to be. Our suggestion is that you should be relatively accurate about the technologies that would exist, but not worry about specific dates for kinds of media.

With those parameters, it’s okay to be listening to OutKast’s *Aquemini* in the summer of 1995, but you can’t have downloaded it from Napster.

There’s no right or wrong answer here. Your group could decide that you’re going to play a game set in the 90s with a different president, different media entirely, and even different technology. As long as your table agrees to the degree of accuracy, you’re playing by the rules of the game.

More seriously, ill-informed arguments about “historical accuracy” are often reasons that players and GMs push marginalized groups out of their games. Throughout these time periods, marginalized people existed, lived, and had vital roles in society. Decrying their inclusion as “historically inaccurate” shows a gross misunderstanding of life for marginalized people in history and is a harmful way to shut down a story. Playing in historical settings is not an opportunity to perpetuate harmful behaviors of the past, many of which



are still with us today. Even if there are settings where certain ethnic groups weren't present historically, you can put them in. Their inclusion is more likely than the paranormal events that occur in most *Kids on Bikes* games!

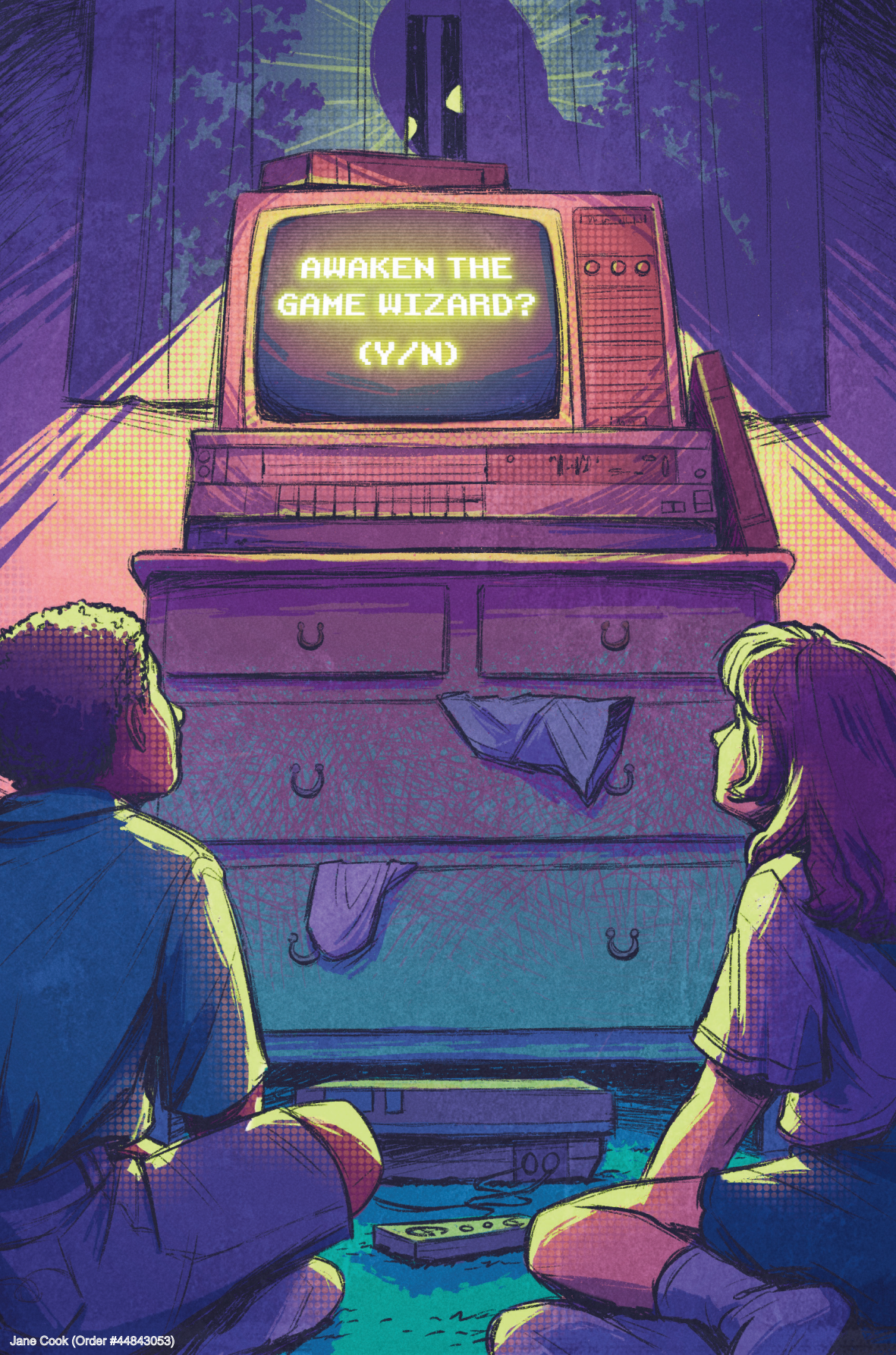
TREATMENT OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS

In addition to their inclusion, consider your table treatment of marginalized groups in historical periods. Systems of oppression throughout history have shifted over time, becoming more obvious in some ways but also more insidious in others. During the discussion of the Detour List, you've already addressed the extent to which you want to play into or avoid discussions of oppression in the game. If you've decided to include it, now's the time to discuss how those systems of oppression will look. If, for example, you've decided to include discrimination based on sexuality in your game set in the 90s, will it look the way it did in the 90s, with slurs and overt discrimination? Or will that discrimination be concealed, more in keeping with contemporary systems of oppression?

In addition, think about the extent to which you want the opportunities available to marginalized groups to reflect history. In the 1960s, a high school would have been unlikely to elect a mixed race couple as homecoming royalty, but that can certainly happen in your game. It's up to your group what you want the norms to be in your game.

Whatever you do, while engaging with systems of oppression might be a way that your group wants to limit characters' choices, they should not negatively impact players' experiences. When making these decisions, make sure that you're valuing players' lived experiences over others' theoretical ones. For example, while a person who has never immigrated might want to play a character facing immigration struggles, including that content in the game might be unpleasant for someone who themselves has immigrated. As always, prioritize avoiding what makes some players uncomfortable over including what others want to play.

Also, if you decide to have your characters face ableism, queerphobia, racism, or other kinds of hate in your game, make sure that you've discussed the kinds of language that you'll use. Some groups may want them referred to in vague terms, like "the r-word". Others still may want these terms to be avoided completely, leaving it as subtext for why bullies are treating them the way they are. No marginalized identity should be treated as a joke or object of pity, caricatured, exotified, or used as a villain's motivations. As long as you're within those bounds, whatever you decide as a table is great.



CHARACTERS' AGES

One of the best parts of this game is the ability to play a variety of characters across different age groups. However, playing characters of all ages can complicate interactions between those differently aged characters. An adult hitting a child will always be child abuse. An adult sexualizing a teenager will always be abuse and pedophilia. Both of these are non-negotiably excluded from the game.

It's important that you all pay attention to what's happening in the fiction around inter-character relationships. It's normal to have conflict between characters and for those moments to get heated. However, if an adult character physically prevents a child from going somewhere the child insists on trying to go, you're running the risk of veering into abuse. Make sure to tread carefully and mindfully when it comes to these interactions.

If some players accidentally wander into this territory, remind them of the gravity of what they're doing and the fine line that they need to walk. It's also a good idea to use your Road Signals to *brake*, *backpedal*, or *coast*. For more on these tools, see Road Signals below.

ROAD SIGNALS

Another feature that you'll see on every character sheet is a set of verbal cues that help navigate gameplay. These cues help navigate content and moments in the game that might be intense or tone breaking for other players or the GM. To use any of them, just say them so everyone can hear you.

In your first session, after establishing the kinds of relationships players are interested in their characters having, the GM will go through all of these phrases with you to make sure you understand them. Each phrase has a special in-game or out-of-game action that goes with it. There is no limit to the amount of times anyone can use these phrases. Rather, they should be used often and easily. The more you use them, the easier using them will become.

Note: *While these are the safety tools we've designed into the game, if other tools work even better for your group, you can use those. As long as you're using safety tools, you're playing within the rules of the game!*

Brake: *Immediately stops play and calls for the scene to end.*

In the game, things fade to black. Out of game, address the content that required the scene to end and, if needed, add it to the Detour list.

Brake is often used when something has come up that breaks the tone, when something from the Detour List has been included, or when new content may need to be added to the list. The scene fades to black and a new scene starts.

Backpedal: *Allows the scene to rewind and be redone or go in a different direction than the group is heading.*

In game, the player rewinds to where they need to go back to, saying what content they need to avoid going forward. Out of game, if the content needs to be added to the Detour List, do so.

Use *backpedal* to change content in a scene that might be breaking tone, upsetting, or ruining someone's fun. Often it's as easy as substituting out the content for something similar but different, like snakes for spiders or one name for another. The original content that was changed may be added to the Detour List, so ask if it needs to go there. Play proceeds as normal after the content has been changed.

Backpedal is also for undoing a scene that ended or is going to end in a way that isn't good for the story or the players, sometimes when someone realizes that they should have used "Brake" earlier. Out of game, it lets everyone discuss quickly what went wrong and then try again, avoiding the pitfalls of the first time. Add anything to the Detour List that needs to be added. Play proceeds forward from the rewind spot, avoiding going down the same road as before.

Finally, *backpedal* helps players who have genuinely misunderstood something earlier in the game and need to shift what their character is doing. After all, you might not want your character to have to wear a bathing suit for the rest of the adventure because you just heard "pool" when the GM told you to get ready to go to the pool hall. Then again, if your character often misunderstands things, you just might want to lean into that...

Pedal harder: *Signals to the players and GM that the direction the story is going is great and can go even further if wanted.*

In game, this means whatever content is being played can go deeper, such as more horrific, haunting, emotional, or dangerous. Out of game, another player can use the next Road Signal by saying "Coast" if they don't want to pedal harder.

Pedal harder is used when the content of the game is good but you'd like it to go further. It may be used to say a player wants more horror, gore, description, intimacy, emotional intensity, or tension. It's a thumbs up with an invitation for more. The table should work together to deepen the story in this area. If anyone is disinterested in pedaling faster, they can say "Coast" to prevent the content from going further.

You or the GM may also use this signal if you want someone to flesh out a description or go further with the consequences of an action.

Coast: *Signal that the current content is okay for the table, but that it should not become more intense or be described in more detail.*

In game, the story maintains its pace and intensity but doesn't get more intense or descriptive with what is happening. Out of game, everything's fine where it is, so there's no need to stop, just a need to not go deeper into what's happening now.

Coast is used when content is getting close to being too intense or descriptive for you. You're fine with the content happening but don't want to see or know more about what is going on. You may enjoy the monster but not want to know what it sounds like when it eats someone. The other players and GM should stay the course but ease off of making anything more intense. *Coast supersedes pedal harder.*

Check Pressure: Asks about content that you worry may push things too far

When you *check pressure*, you'll be stating what you want to add even though you think it might go too far for some players. If everyone agrees, then stay the course and add the content in-game. If anyone hesitates, deflects, shrugs, or doesn't give an excited yes, then do not add the content.

Check pressure allows anyone to ask before adding difficult, gritty, horrific, or potentially upsetting content. If anything you are thinking about introducing into gameplay comes close to the Detour List or you're concerned it might upset a player, use this road signal first to make sure people are excited about it. If someone mentions they are uncomfortable with the new addition, add that content to the Detour List and move on.

Remember, getting buy-in from everyone should be a fun process. When someone isn't that interested, they'll say things like, "Sure," "I guess," or "If you want..." rather than things like "Yes," "That sounds cool," or "I'm into it!" Only positive affirmatives or enthusiastic affirmatives count. Passive or disinterested ones mean no.

Also, if there's content on the Detour List, you can't *check pressure* to ask about adding it to the game. Players have already indicated that they don't want to include that content in the game.

Rest Stop: Calls for an in-game and out-of-game break for any reason.

In-game, pause the scene. Out of game, take a break. Players can get food, go to the bathroom, sit, or decompress. Play proceeds as normal after the break is done.

Rest stop is a way to say you need to pause— even though you're having fun and don't want to change the content. These are used for taking care of ourselves while we play games together to ensure everyone's feeling well and healthy when they play the game. Rest stops can be taken as often as wanted.

WHY REST STOPS?

Human bodies need breaks from continuous activity, whether that's playing a game or working. These breaks ensure we get what our bodies need, like food and water, but also that we get what our minds need, like time to chat with our friends or decompress after an intense scene. Breaks are vital for the health of the table, and aren't optional. Though your group should decide what's best for all of you, a "rest stop" should happen about every 90 minutes.

Rest stops are a good time to do any or all of the following:

~ Check In With the Whole Table

- ~ Unless people need to leave the table right away, go around the table, having everyone share how they're feeling about the game and the story. Ask if there's anything the group can do to make the game more fun for everyone.
- ~ Even if you have a lot to say, make sure that you give everyone a chance to talk and don't dominate the conversation. Reach out to players who may be quieter, but don't push them too much. They might not be ready to share yet.
- ~ If someone gives you feedback, even critical feedback, thank them for it and do your best to integrate their feedback.
- ~ This is the perfect time to discuss what you'd like to see more or less of in the game or what you'd like to see added that isn't in there yet.

~ Check In With Each Other

- ~ If something happens in the game that is intense, upsetting, or hitting some high impact content, it's best to check in after. Likewise, if someone calls brake or backpedal, it's also a good idea for the GM to talk to them. And of course, if someone's behavior seems to have changed—like they've gotten quieter or louder, seem to be lashing out, or anything like that—the GM should check in with them, too.
- ~ When checking in, ask someone how they're feeling, either in general or about a specific event or moment in the game. It can be asking how they feel about the outcome of using one of the Road Signals or if they need to stop the game. These are best done privately, as speaking in front of a group can be hard.
- ~ If they express negative emotions, ask what they need and what you can do to help, from just moving on to ending the session early.

~ Engage In Self Care

- ~ Of course, rest stops are a perfect time to get some water, have a healthy snack, or hit the bathroom.
- ~ If the weather's good, stepping outside for some fresh air can also rejuvenate you. If it's not, make sure that you stretch a little, as sitting for too long can get uncomfortable.
- ~ Your brain, too, can always benefit from having a break so that you can return to the game feeling both physically and mentally rejuvenated.

ROMANCE AND INTIMACY BETWEEN CHARACTERS

In *Kids on Bikes*, characters of different ages may not be intimate with each other, either in gameplay or in characters' backstories. While it's okay for a younger character to think that an older character is cute or have a small crush on them, it is a non-negotiable hard line that those feelings will not be reciprocated. Also, there will never be physical intimacy between children or teens with more than two years' difference in age. Whereas adults can be on equal footing in a relationship despite decades' difference in age, developmental stages mean that children and teens change rapidly and thus cannot be on equal footing.

Children should not engage in sexual intimacy. They've got monsters to fight! Age differences between players, as well as player characters, inform the way that stories are safely told. No matter the age of your character, make sure maturity is a factor in the stories you tell about relationships.

As you come together to tell a story through play, feelings between characters might develop, grow, and become romantic. This could mean cute crushes between kids, high school dating between teenagers, or deeper love and long-term partnerships between adults. Your characters will develop many social connections over the course of their journey, and high stress situations tend to encourage those deep bonds.

It's important to remember, however, that not everyone experiences the same feelings about romance and intimacy. Some players aren't interested in or comfortable with roleplaying romance. Some may want to incorporate romance on some level, but don't want to pedal full-throttle. You may be open to your character experiencing physical connections, or you may want to keep intimacy as far from your character as possible. Discuss collaboratively at the outset of your game if romantic relationships will be an element of the story you're choosing to tell, and use tools to be specific about the personal preference of each player.

To accommodate this, each player has a section on their **Consent Sheet** that allows them to select the levels of romance they are interested in.

There are also blank spaces on the sheet to clarify other preferences about in-game intimacy. You might prefer to only roleplay intimacy with non-player characters, for example, or you'd like for your character to have a long distance relationship that doesn't get mentioned frequently.

If you're okay with other players having a crush on you, check the **Crush box**. A crush is considered relatively harmless with no intimacy. Characters may get flustered, blush, try to show affection through small gifts, acts of service, or compliments. They may hold hands or even share a small kiss on the cheek. Remember, though, that many of these ways of expressing a crush are culturally specific. For some, a small gift might be no big deal.

For others, it might express more than just a crush. Write in any additional notes that you need, and remember that players will check in with you before roleplaying any kind of intimacy with your character.

If you're okay with dating, check the **Date box**. Dating is going out to places, hanging out together, sharing an emotional bond, with minimal or light physical intimacy. Characters might be jealous or protective of each other. They might show affection with grand gestures, by being helpful, protecting each other, or helping the other succeed. They may cuddle, kiss, make out, or have sex. (Underage characters should not be discussed having sex.)

If you're okay having a romantic commitment, check the **Partner box**. Partners spend a lot of time together, are often in a committed relationship like a marriage or common-law marriage, and often live together. They may show affection through inside jokes, shared history, having or adopting children together, doing household chores for one another, or helping the other get through their daily lives. They may share an easier physical intimacy, regularly have sex or other physical closeness, and know each other very intimately.

If you're okay with your character being physically intimate, check one of the two **Intimacy boxes**. The first, "On-Screen Intimacy," indicates that you're okay with the kinds of physical affection mentioned for each relationship and that you're okay with them occurring on screen for your character. Make sure to include notes about your comfort describing different kinds of intimacy on-screen.

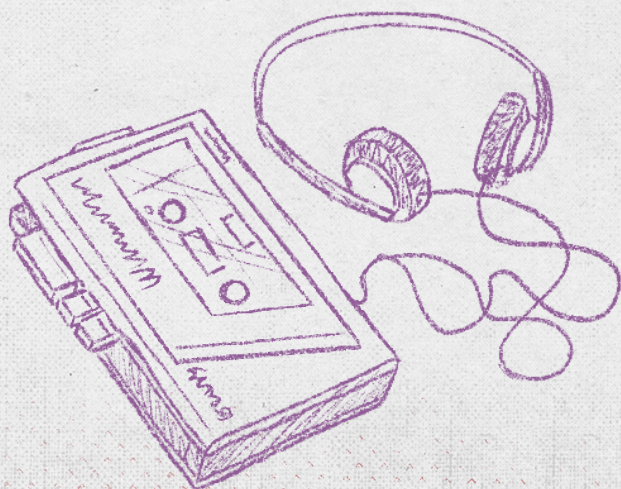
The second, "Off-Screen Intimacy," indicates that you're okay with any of the kinds of physical affection mentioned for each relationship but that you only want them to occur in ways that are not described at the table. For example, this could mean that you're fine with your character making out with another character as long as it isn't narrated at the table. A player who selects this option may say, "I drive him up to Make-Out Point, and we make out, but I don't want to describe that. After a half hour of that, we decide to drive home." Alternatively, that player may not want those kinds of physical intimacy described at all. They may instead say, "We go out for a drive, then come home about half an hour later."

Much like romantic feelings, when it comes to physical intimacy, these scenes are often pivotal for the characters. Make sure when playing these stories you're revealing how this relationship influences the character, what the relationship reveals about them, and why it's important. Do not luridly describe sexual intimacy, especially for non-adult characters. Instead, cut to after that intimacy and tell the table what those vulnerable moments show about the characters involved.

These relationship options are malleable and may change as the story progresses. Before having a character initiate any kind of intimacy with your character, another player or the GM will ask to make sure that you're comfortable with this. Also, at the start of sessions, players should update on their sheet and verbally indicate any broad changes to their comfort levels with intimacy. It's normal and natural that these preferences shift as both you and your character experience the game. A kid growing up may develop a crush. A teenager may no longer want to date. An adult may want a committed relationship when the player originally thought that wasn't for them. As trust is established in the group, feelings about these relationships may change. That's great!

If a player suggests that your character become intimate with their character and you don't want to, simply tell them that. If you would like to explain why not, you may. If you would prefer not to explain or discuss it further, you can simply say, "That's not the story I'd like to tell," and discussion of the topic will end immediately.

The same approach can be used if a scene involving intimacy becomes uncomfortable for you, whether your character is involved in it or not. At any point during a scene involving intimacy, any player at the table may use the safety tools to call for a *Brake*, *Backpedal*, or *Coast* as needed—just as they can at any point in the game. And as before, while you may discuss boundaries, any player can end the conversation with "That's not the story I'd like to tell."



USING OTHER TOOLS

Some groups who've played together many times before have established norms and tools that they've all agreed to and would prefer to use instead of the ones that we've adapted for Kids on Bikes. We like having a pre-game form to establish Detours ahead of time, but some groups would rather use the X-Card and address things as they come up. We like having specific in-game terms to give players language to communicate concisely, but some groups might prefer instead to use terms they're familiar with.

There's no best set of tools for every table, so we encourage you to use the ones that will make the game most enjoyable and safest for everyone you're playing with. So if the Pre-Game Form, Detour List, and Road Signals aren't for your group, that's fine! The only requirement is that you have some codified way for players to communicate and remain safe at the table.

Now that you've had the discussions that will make sure that everyone's excited about the game you'll play, it's time to create your town.



CHAPTER 2: WORLD BUILDING

Kids on Bikes is usually set in a small town at any point in history before everyone could record videos with the cell phone in their pocket at all times. It is typically a place remote enough that the rest of the world doesn't care about it but close enough that black helicopters can be there within an hour or two. Everyone in the town knows almost everyone else—for better and for worse. People look out for each other, and rumors travel fast.

The game should happen in a town where you can bike from one side to the other in under an hour—so a town that's no more than ten miles across. A town this size also allows non-player characters (NPCs) to hear and spread both information and rumors very quickly. And, more frighteningly, it prevents you from having a lot of places to hide. It's also important that parts are empty, especially at night.

During Session Zero, the GM will walk the players through crafting their town, their characters, and their relationships. Taking the time to do this in-depth creation is important, especially if you'll be playing many sessions. For shorter games or "one shots", the GM could create the town for you, leaving the players to focus only on their own characters and relationships with other characters.



COLLABORATIVE CREATION

Your decisions from earlier about the tone of the game will help guide the decisions you'll make when creating the town. As with the rest of the game, there are no wrong answers here. It's whatever all the players want the game to be. You, the other players, and the GM should have already addressed the time period that you want your game to take place in. Now that you've done that, you're ready to start making your town!

When building the world together, players take turns answering the following questions to create your town, adapting the number of questions asked as indicated below so that each player is answering the same number of questions about the town.

1. Our adventure takes place in... (name of town and state/province/territory/region)
2. The industry our town is best known for is...
3. Our town is famous for...
4. Our town is infamous for...
5. Economically, our town is... (e.g., prospering, floundering, starting to stagnate) and one effect of that is...
6. A notable local organization is... — Duplicate in a five-player game.

7. A notable local landmark is... — Duplicate in a three-player game or five-player game.
8. Our school's mascot is...
9. The town closest to us is named... and our relationship with that town is... (e.g., amicably competitive, unrestrainedly resentful, economically envious, paternalistically helpful). — Answer as a group with as much discussion as you need.

After constructing the town, each of you shares one rumor about the town. Especially in a small town, rumors drive a lot of what goes on. These can be mundane or supernatural, big or small, personal or about the entire town, generally believed or completely fringe... anything you want. The GM writes these rumors down, keeping them in mind so that they can influence the upcoming game, though there may be sources for the rumor that the players can't even imagine. As long as you're within the bounds of what the group has agreed to include in the game, there are no wrong answers. Also, not all rumors have any truth to them.

For example, the players agree that the adventure is going to take place in 1993 and be a fairly serious game. Carlos goes first and says that they're in a town called Perkins, Colorado. Yasmin follows and says that the town is best known for mining. Breanna then says that the town is famous for its candles, which it has made and sold to the world for years. Carlos then says that the town is infamous for a mining accident that trapped twelve miners underground ten years ago. Yasmin decides that the town is prospering as workers shift from mining to other more modern industries, but they decide not to define those industries or the consequences of that modernization quite yet. Breanna says that a notable local organization is the Elks, an organization that most of the adult men in the town belong to. Carlos says that one notable local landmark is the closed mine that no one is allowed to go near. Yasmin adds that another notable landmark is the diving cliff, a place where teens often jump into the river that surges during the late spring thaw. Breanna rounds out the answers by saying that the high school's mascot is a mountain lion.

They then decide that the town closest to them is River Belt, also in Colorado. The relationship between the two towns is, historically, good. While people generally live in the town where they work, visiting or shopping in the other town is common. There's nothing contentious about their relationship... at least not yet.

As they move into the rumors, Carlos says that he heard that the Elks is really a front for a devil-worshipping cult. Yasmin says that she heard that Mrs. Worthy, the principal at the high school, is carrying on an affair with Mr. Yates, the principal of the elementary school. Finally, Breanna says that she heard that when they found the miners' bodies, they couldn't find two of

them—and that the ten that were recovered seemed to have been attacked by some sort of animal, not killed in the mine collapse.

Gauthier, the GM, will abide by the elements that the players created for the town. But over the course of the game, the GM and the players can decide together whether any of those rumors are true, if there’s only a shred of truth to them, or if they’re outright lies.

DICE-BASED TOWN CREATION

If you’re planning to play multiple sessions of Kids on Bikes or if you want to focus on the town creation, you might decide to make a map of your town. Some players enjoy having a visual representation of where they are in the town, what’s near what, and how long it might take to get from the roller-skating rink to the creepy old house that always has just one light on inside. The following, a way to generate parts of your town, is something we’ve adapted from the *Junior Braves of the Apocalypse* RPG with their permission.

To start, get a large piece of paper. Butcher paper or six pieces of printer paper taped together will work well. Take a set of polyhedral dice (and more dice if you’d like to add more features to your town) and toss them onto the paper. Use the location the dice land and the face-up number to create locations in your town based on the following chart:

Roll	Location	Roll	Location
1	Old Neighborhood	11	Train or Bus Station
2	New Neighborhood	12	Vacant House
3	Cluster of businesses or strip mall	13	City Dump
4	Library	14	Barbershop
5	Grocery Store	15	Ice Cream Store or Bakery
6	Church	16	Airport
7	Lake or Reservoir	17	Forest
8	Park or Playground	18	Monument
9	Restaurant or Diner	19	Roller Skating Rink or Pool
10	Office Park	20	Office Park

The lower numbers might well come up more than once, but these are common locations that might appear multiple times, even in a small town. If your town has three diners, that might be an interesting aspect of your town to play around with. However, if you roll something that doesn’t make sense or roll too many of the same number, feel free to reroll.

After you've drawn these onto the map, add the following to the map:

- ~ The town's schools;
- ~ Each character's house;
- ~ Any locations that you established in the collaborative town-creation questions, like any sites relevant to important industries, the headquarters of notable local organizations, and any notable landmarks;

If there are any other locations that players want to include in the map or any key geographic features like rivers, ocean fronts, mountains, or the like, draw those in now. Make sure that you have roads connecting the locations in your town.

Don't get bogged down in making the map look beautiful, no matter how talented an artist you may be. A box, circle, or ten-second drawing of whatever it is will work perfectly for the purposes of this map. Of course, if you want to make the map fancier, you can do that between sessions.

For example, the players roll the dice and get 1, 3, 3, 3, 5, and 17. That gives them an old neighborhood, three strip malls, a grocery store, and a forest. Though the town is economically prospering with the new industries coming in, the players and GM agree that three strip malls in the late 70s may be a bit too much, so they reroll one of the 3s, getting a 9: a diner. They quickly draw these onto the map, then put in the other features: where their characters will live, the elementary and combined middle and high school, and the features they came up with during town creation. Then, they add the diving cliff and river on the western edge of town, the Elks Club's headquarters, the collapsed mine, and the candle factory. Yasmin thinks that a church would round out the town, and the other players and GM agree, so they draw it in. Finally, they add in roads connecting all of the features they've drawn.



CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER CREATION

The core of any RPG is the character you'll be embodying: your "PC", or player character. You and your GM will work together to create a character you'll be excited to play, one who you can relate to in important ways—but who also allows you to escape the real world.

If there are parameters that you, as a player or GM, want the characters to have, set them at the beginning of Character Creation. You might prefer all the characters to be in middle school or to have all shared an experience together. Make the world you'll be playing in exactly what you want it to be.

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

When creating your character, go through the following steps in this order:

1. Select a Trope from the Playbook and take the appropriate character sheet;
2. Make Trope selections for your character: Age, Strengths, a Flaw, and a first name;
3. Introduce your character to the rest of the group;
4. Answer questions about your character's relationship with the other characters;
5. Select the finishing touches for your character: Motivations, a Fear, Obligations, Knacks, what's in your Backpack, a last name, Trope-specific questions, and a Bike;

SELECTING A TROPE

To streamline the character creation process, we've created a set of Tropes that you can use at the start of the game to develop your character concept quickly. These Tropes fall into categories like Conspiracy Theorist, Silver Spoon, or Brilliant Mathlete. Selecting one Trope will determine your character's Stat dice and offer suggestions for choosing details about their personality and background. These Tropes and their details are in **Appendix C - Tropes** on page 156.

Choose the Trope that you're most interested in playing. There's no right or wrong answers here. Your GM will work with you to make sure that, whatever character you choose, you'll be central to the story of the game. Always remember that Tropes are touchstones to help you jump in. They are not stereotypes to play in boring, cliché, or harmful ways. True, the Reclusive Eccentric isn't going to be as charming as Popular Kid. But, as in life, be careful not to assume too much about a person based only on a few descriptors.



If you don't find a Trope that fits your sense of your character, feel free to work with the GM to create your character from the ground up. This will take more time, but for players who already have a clear vision of who they want their character to be—or for players who don't want their character to fit into one Trope or another—this might be the most satisfying way to create their character. For more details on this process, refer to “Creating a Character from Scratch” on page 30.

In the bottom right corner of each Trope table in **Appendix C** on page 156, you'll find two questions specific to your Trope. These will help you flesh out who you are. You don't need to answer these out loud, but by the end of the character creation process, you should know what your answers are. It may be beneficial to answer these questions after you create relationships with the other characters as discussed in “Introductions & Questions” on page 32.

CHARACTER STATS

The Trope you choose will determine how you assign dice to your six stats. The higher the possible value on a die, the better your character is with that stat. The six stats are:

- ~ **Brains:** This stat determines how book-smart a character is. It will determine how well they understand problems, how well they did or are doing in school, and how quickly they're able to solve intellectual puzzles.
 - ~ *Likely verbs: calculate, confuse, decode, learn, remember, solve, understand;*
- ~ **Brawn:** This stat determines how much brute strength a character has. It does not determine how well they can fight—just how well they can lift things and how athletic they are overall. It also determines how physically intimidating a character is.
 - ~ *Likely verbs: bend, climb, carry, lift, hurl, swim, throw;*
- ~ **Fight:** This stat determines how scary your character is, both in and out of a fight. They'll be able to learn to fight or to use weapons more easily. It also determines how intimidating a character is and how much it looks like they can handle themselves if things get physical.
 - ~ *Likely verbs: intimidate, parry, punch, scare, shoot, threaten, wrestle;*
- ~ **Flight:** This stat determines how fast a character is as well as how skilled they are at evading their problems (literally, figuratively, or both). Characters with a high Flight will be fast and tough to catch both physically and verbally, smooth talkers whose legs and mouths are quick.
 - ~ *Likely verbs: avoid, dodge, drive, escape, evade, outrun, snatch;*

~ **Charm:** This stat determines how socially adept a character is and how good they are at reading the emotions of another person or group of people. Characters with a high Charm will be able to talk themselves out of tough situations and into good ones with relative ease, within reason.

~ *Likely verbs: convince, entice, flatter, lie, persuade, sweet talk, trick;*

~ **Grit:** This stat determines how hard it is to unsettle a character emotionally or physically. Characters with a high Grit will be able to keep a level head in the worst of situations and will be able to keep their cool even when pushed hard. Finally, this stat also determines how street-smart a character is.

~ *Likely verbs: brace, endure, refuse, resist, see through, struggle against, withstand;*

The higher a stat is, the better a character is at skills involving that stat - and the more likely they are to succeed when using that stat. While there's no guarantee that you'll roll your maximum, generally, characters will be better able to pass checks with their higher dice.

Die	Brief Explanation
d20	Superb: Even upon first meeting you, anyone would be able to readily tell that this is a strength of yours. You are remarkably good with respect to this stat.
d12	Impressive: People who know you would say that you're pretty good with respect to this stat, but it wouldn't be something that's obvious during a first encounter.
d10	Above Average: You aren't remarkably good in terms of this stat, but you're slightly above average.
d8	Below Average: You aren't too bad in terms of this stat, but you're certainly not good, either. You're just slightly worse than average.
d6	Bad: People who know you would say that you're pretty bad with respect to this stat, but it wouldn't be something that's obvious during a first encounter.
d4	Terrible: Upon first meeting you, people would immediately be able to tell that this is a weakness of yours. You are remarkably bad with respect to this stat.

When creating your character, think carefully about how your d20 stat and your d4 stat balance each other out. If your character has a d20 in Charm and a d4 in Flight, consider what that means for your character. Have they always talked their way out of their problems instead of having to run from them - including gym class? Or were they always so slow that they had to use humor and kindness to compensate for their inability to escape? Think about how your other stats' values relate to this balance, too.

Stats will also be used to resolve skill checks and violence, which we'll address in "Stat Checks" on page 46 and "Doing Harm" on page 58.

CHARACTERS' AGES

For many of the Tropes, you'll also need to pick your character's age: child, teen, or adult. The age of the characters has implications throughout the character creation process and during gameplay. The rules will discuss these implications as they become important.

Groups of characters can certainly be a mixture of all three ages, and if they are, the GM and the players will just need to establish early on what draws their characters together for their first adventure. For future adventures, you'll be linked by the events of the first session.

At the start of the character creation process, the character's age determines what Strengths each character gets for free and which two stats have a +1 modifier.

Children automatically receive the *Quick Healing* Strength, and they cannot take the *Rebellious* Strength. When rolling stat checks (described in the "Stat Checks" section, starting on page 46), children add +1 to their Flight and Charm checks, as they're quick and generally likable.

Teens automatically receive the *Rebellious* Strength. When rolling stat checks, teens add +1 to their Fight and Brawn checks, as they're pugnacious and in their prime.

Adults automatically receive the *Skilled at* ____ Strength. This skill, selected by the character's player, will correspond to their life experiences, often representing a job they've held or a skill they've honed over the years. When rolling stat checks, adults add +1 to their Brains and Grit checks. Even if they aren't always geniuses, they've seen enough of the world to know what it's about and to not get shaken by much.

SELECTING STRENGTHS, A FLAW, AND A NAME

Once you've selected your Trope and age, choose from the Strengths and Flaws associated with that character. Both will have mechanical implications for your character related to Adversity Tokens. Strengths are mechanical advantages that your character will have when playing the game. Some are always active, meaning that you do not need to spend Adversity Tokens to use them. Others will have an Adversity Token cost listed in their description, which you need to spend to use their effects. Each player starts the game with 3 AT in their supply. For more on these tokens, see "Adversity Tokens" on page 49.

A Flaw will help you develop your character's personality and will give you the opportunity for earning more Adversity Tokens. When you fail a roll because of acting on your Flaw, you'll earn an additional Adversity Token. But make sure that you're not leaning too heavily into your Flaw and making the game less fun for your fellow players or acting in ways that no reasonable person would. For example, if they're being chased by a monster, even an absent-minded character wouldn't get distracted by a Rubik's Cube while the rest of the gang is busily trying to barricade the door.

Choose two Strengths and one Flaw from the ones associated with your character's Trope. Or, if you want to draw from the larger list when deciding, you may. The full lists can be found in **Appendix D - Strengths** on page 165 and in **Appendix E - Flaws** on page 166. Of course, if there's a Flaw that you'd like your character to have that isn't part of the list, talk to your GM. As long as the Flaw won't negatively impact anyone else's enjoyment, your GM should allow it.

Now, give your character a first name—or a nickname that they go by. Hold off on a last name in case, as you're introducing your characters and doing relationship questions, you find that they're related to another character. While in real life, we can't tell much about a person just from their name, when choosing for your character, lean into evocative names. There's a big difference between what "Billy" and "William" evoke.

For example, Yasmin decides that she'll be playing Kalsang, an adult Blue Collar Worker. Her parents immigrated from Tibet to Perkins shortly before her birth, so she has lived her whole life in the same small American town, so she doesn't feel especially Tibetan. Her husband, who died in the mining accident, was fifth generation Perkins. However, her heritage is important to her parents and to her son, Daniel. As a result, she's fluent in Lhasa and cooks a pretty mean thukpa. She selects Tough and Prepared as her Strengths. Since she works as a car mechanic, she takes Car Repair for her Skilled at... Strength. For Kalsang's Flaw, Yasmin decides that she'll be overprotective, which isn't on the suggested list. She checks with Gauthier and the other players, and they agree that's fine. For her Trope-Specific Questions, she decides that she currently works as a car mechanic, a job she took after her injury at her previous job, working as a machinist for the mining company, which happened during the mine's collapse. She enjoys working on cars quite a lot more, and with her fear of suffocation, going anywhere near the mines just wouldn't be an option for her anymore. Mechanically, this establishes what she's Skilled at: car repair. Whenever she makes a check related to this, she'll get +3. In response to the other question, she explains that losing this job would mean that she wouldn't be able to provide for her son, Daniel, though she's also confident that she's skilled enough to get another job. She decides that she's happy to share both of these answers with the other characters; both are something that others in town could pretty easily know about her.

Carlos decides he'll play Oswald, a teenage Brilliant Mathlete. He selects Intuitive and Loyal for his Strengths, and he gets Rebellious automatically as a teen. He decides that his flaw is that he's clumsy. For his Trope-Specific Questions, Oswald says that he gets satisfaction from being good generally in school when his parents praise his achievements and just from learning what he's learning. It isn't about success for him. It's about the love of knowledge. In terms of how his social isolation manifests, he says that it comes in the form of just having one close friend, but that doesn't bother him at all.

Breanna names her character Isabella, a teenage Aspiring Wannabe. She selects Unassuming and Wealthy (a Strength that's not on the Trope's likely Strengths), and, like Oswald, gets Rebellious automatically. Her Flaw, she decides, is that she's envious. For her Trope-Specific Questions, she answers that she thinks getting to be part of the cool kids would mean the end of a lot of stressors in her life—though Breanna, the person playing Isabella, indicates that being cool would just bring new stressors for Isabella. In terms of what she'd be willing to sacrifice, she states that she'd happily change her interests and hobbies, but wouldn't be willing to pretend to be romantically interested in someone or be physically intimate with them. She recently realized that she's never really been attracted to anyone and wonders if she just hasn't met the right person yet, but Breanna establishes that she's definitely asexual. This is an aspect of her character that she wants to be a focal point of the roleplaying, but she lets the other players and the GM know about this so that it can be subtext to their roleplaying—but she makes it clear that no other character, PC or NPC (“non-player character,” a character controlled by the GM), knows this about her. Isabella isn't even sure of it herself.

INCLUDING DISABLED CHARACTERS OR NEUROATYPICAL CHARACTERS

For some players, a traditionally able-bodied or neurotypical character might not fit their vision of their character. A player may want to play a character who is physically disabled or whose brain is neurodivergent. When including these players, it's vital that neither disability nor neurodivergence are played as jokes, caricatures, villain motivations, or targets for exotification or pity.

The player introducing the character with a disability or neurodivergence will establish how much it impacts the narrative. For example, a character in a wheelchair could establish that they would have trouble in chases—or they could establish that being in a wheelchair won't affect the narrative. Or, they could decide that they'll let the group know when they want their character's using a wheelchair to impact the narrative. It's entirely up to them, though other players can, of course, ask them to alter their roleplaying if it's upsetting to them.

Ultimately, playing a character with a disability or a neurodivergence is about playing the character you want to play. As long as you aren't causing harm by perpetuating stereotypes or mocking identities, you're within the rules of the game. You can opt in to playing these characters, but you can't opt in to making fun of groups.

For example, Kalsang has a persistent injury from a workplace accident some years ago. As a result, she and the GM agree that she won't be able to stand for long periods of time or walk for more than a mile without resting. Yasmin says that this injury won't define Kalsang, though they agree that this is a place where the GM can create tension for her during the game.

Oswald has ADHD, and this is something that he tells the GM and the other players will affect him narratively. On the one hand, Oswald will tend to lose focus when trying to maintain concentration on a task for too long. On the other hand, he's sometimes able to make connections between seemingly disparate events or clues.

OPTION — CREATING A CHARACTER FROM SCRATCH

Some players may wish to create their character entirely from scratch rather than beginning with a premade Trope. Doing so takes longer, but it allows for unique characters, ones who don't fit into any single mold. If this is a route you're interested in, we encourage you to take it.

Using the blank character sheet in the Playbook or on page 178 of this rulebook, begin by assigning the dice that you'll use for your stats. The best way to do this is to assign your d20 stat and d4 stat, then think about how your character uses their highest stat to compensate for their lowest one. Then, assign the other dice to the other stats based on that characterization.

Next, select your age: child, teen, or adult. Remember to give yourself the appropriate bonuses based on your age. Children get +1 to Charm and Flight and get Quick Healing for free. Teens get +1 to Brawn and Fight and get Rebellious for free. Adults get +1 to Brains and Grit and Skilled at ____ for free.

Then, select your other two Strengths. Referring to the list in **Appendix D** on page 165, select two that fit with your vision for your character. Then, select your Flaw. You may select any one from the list in **Appendix E** on page 166 or create your own if your GM allows it.

Finally, give your character a first name. From this point on, character creation continues to "Introductions & Questions" in the following section.



INTRODUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Now that you have the basics of your character sketched out, think about how you're related to the other characters at the table. We encourage you to make these decisions based on what other players tell you about their characters. While it probably wouldn't make much sense for every character in a five player game to be the very best of friends with every other character at the table, each character should have at least one meaningful connection to at least half of the other characters. This will give your GM ways to bring your characters together in the narrative. On the other hand, in a game with only two or three players, it might make sense for everyone to have a close connection with the other characters.

To do this, after the first player introduces their character, a player who thinks that they have a relationship to that character should introduce themselves, explaining how they know the previous character. Subsequent players should then introduce their character by explaining their relationship with a previously introduced character. It's fine if one of the characters is the only connection for the others. As you play, your relationships will develop, deepen, or change.



Here are some possible relationships: parents and children, siblings, step-siblings, and half-siblings; cousins; classmates; teachers and students; coaches and athletes; best friends or worst enemies; neighbors; mentors and mentees; bosses and employees; and significant others, spouses, or exes.

This is a good time to start talking as your character: "We know each other from back when we were in high school" rather than "My character dated their character for a few years."

For example, Oswald, Isabella, and Kalsang are talking about how they know each other. Isabella says that she and Oswald used to be close friends, since they're neighbors, but when she started trying to be one of the cool kids a few years ago, she stopped hanging out with Oswald completely and quite suddenly. Oswald adds that since they started out as friends because they're neighbors, he wasn't all that hurt when they stopped hanging out. He just kind of shifted to hanging out with other people, and it was fine.

Kalsang says that she knows Oswald because he's friends with her son, Daniel, who's also not that popular in school. She says that Oswald often sleeps over, so she knows him well enough to know that he likes spinach on his pizza. Oswald adds that he feels comfortable talking to Kalsang —more so than to his parents sometimes, so he often confides in her. Kalsang and Isabella agree that they don't know each other well. Since it's a small town,

though, they know each other by sight. Everyone in their small town knows everyone else in their small town by sight.

Having broadly established how you know and don't know each other, each of you will answer questions about the other characters. You'll do this one at a time, passing the list of questions around the table and collaborating to make the established relationships more complex and to hint at information about who you don't know. This process will make the story of the game richer, even before the strange events start happening.

Depending on the length of time that you have for character creation, you could take one of three approaches to answering the questions: quick start, one sided, or complete.

- ~ For the “quick start” version, each of you will answer just one question about just one other player. This question will come from **Appendix F, Relationship Questions for a Character You Know - Positive**, found on page 167 or **Appendix G, Relationship Questions for a Character You Know - Negative**, found on page 168—depending on the relationship you have with that character. In this version, do not use the questions from **Appendix H, Relationship Questions for a Character You Don't Know**. You must have an established relationship with the character you're answering the question about.
- ~ For the “one sided” version, each of you will answer just one question about each other player. For each character, choose one question from the Positive (**Appendix F** on page 167), Negative (**Appendix G** on page 168), and Character You Don't Know (**Appendix H** on page 169). Base this choice on your relationship or lack of relationship with each character, but make sure that you have an established relationship with at least half of the other characters—but have as many established relationships as you want. Also, remember that in a small town, you'll know nearly everyone by sight even if you don't have a relationship with them.
- ~ For the “complete” version, you will answer two questions, a Positive one and a Negative one, about each character you know. You will answer one question, from the Character You Don't Know list, about characters you don't know. Make sure that you have an established relationship with at least half of the other characters—but have as many established relationships as you want, and remember that you'll know all of the PCs by sight even if you don't have a relationship with them.

We strongly recommend taking the time to do the complete questions. The answers will give you the richest storytelling and roleplaying. It will also give your GM more hooks to use later, but it will also take the most time. If you're planning to play a campaign of *Kids on Bikes*, though, the time

it takes is worth it. Devote as much of your Session Zero as you need to building these relationships!

For shorter games, choose either of the other options, though the “quick start” version is intended only for games that you need to start quite quickly. Again, the more connections you have between characters, the richer your game will be.

To answer a question, select the list that you want to use, roll a d20, and answer the question corresponding to it. If the question has already been answered or if it doesn’t make sense for your character, you may, if you want, reroll or choose an adjacent question to answer.

For example, the group agrees to do the complete questions, since they’re starting a campaign. Oswald goes first and feels mostly positive about Kalsang and rolls a 15: “What do you and this character have a mutual love of that no one else in town seems to like?” He decides that they both really, really like fantasy novels. Kalsang was reading *The Hobbit* when he was over at Daniel’s house a few years ago, and he borrowed it, read it, and couldn’t get enough fantasy novels. In Colorado in the early 80s, where the game takes place, there aren’t that many people who read those kinds of books.

Then he rolls a negative question about her and gets a 9: “What does this character often do that makes you irrationally angry?” Oswald decides that doesn’t really fit their relationship and rerolls, getting a 5: “This character regularly does something that hurts you, perhaps without knowing it. What is it, and why do you think they keep doing it?” He has a very positive relationship with Kalsang, so it isn’t something bad. But, he decides that as much as their weird love of fantasy novels connects them, every time she asks him about it, he’s reminded that his own mother tells him that he shouldn’t be wasting his time with them, and it hurts just a little, though he’d never say anything about it.

Now, he answers about Isabella. He chooses a positive question and rolls a 5: “In what way do you care for them that they can’t or won’t reciprocate?” He decides that Isabella, in trying to seem cool, has ignored him the last few times he has tried to say hi in public. The first time it didn’t bother him, but by the third and final time he tried, he started missing when they were friends.

For his last question, he rolls for a negative question about her and gets a 7: “What dishonest thing did you see this character do that still bothers you to this day?” He decides that a few weeks ago, he saw Isabella shoplift something to try to impress the cool kids. It was something small, just a pack of Skittles, but it reminded him of how much she had changed since they were friends, and that made him sad.

Now, it's Kalsang's turn. She rolls for Isabella, whom she doesn't know. She gets a 6: "Why is this character's family so important in town?" Kalsang asks if everyone's okay with Isabella's mom being the mayor and her dad owning the grocery store, so both of them are pillars of the community. They're both good people, and they're well-respected in town. The group, especially Isabella, agrees.

Kalsang then rolls a positive question for Oswald, a 4: "What part of this character's personality do they not realize is exceptional?" She asks Carlos for more information about how he's planning to play Oswald, and he says that Oswald, sometimes to a fault, is open and honest with people. Kalsang decides that this part of him is exceptional, especially the older he gets. He has, so far, avoided teenaged cynicism, and that's amazing to her.

Finally, she rolls a negative question for Oswald, an 16: "You hurt this character years ago. Why can't you apologize?" Kalsang decides that about a year ago, Kalsang and Oswald's father nearly had an affair. Though nothing more than a few kisses happened, it caused serious tension between Oswald's parents. Kalsang doesn't know if Oswald's mother knows or if Kalsang just projected the concerns. She's fairly sure that Oswald has no idea even though he has said that things have been weird between his parents. (This would be something that the player controlling Oswald would know but, in the game, Oswald would not.) Because he doesn't know, she can't apologize to him for what she assumes is her role in that tension.

Now, it's Isabella's turn. She rolls a 16 on a positive question for Oswald: "You recently thought you lost this character. How? Why was that so upsetting?" Isabella says that she and Oswald don't have much of a relationship anymore, especially with the way that she has ignored him out in public. She's worried that, now, she has completely lost that relationship that reminds her of her past. Even though she wants to be a cool kid, every once in a while she wants to go back to not caring about what other people think about her.

For her negative question about him, she rolls an 18: "How did this character betray you the last time you confided in them?" Isabella and Oswald agree that he's not the type to betray people easily—so Isabella decides that it was unintentional. A few months ago, Isabella told Oswald about how much pressure her parents were putting on her, and Oswald talked to Daniel about it. A few of the cool kids overheard, and they made fun of Isabella for even talking to Oswald.

As a final question, Isabella rolls a 5 for her question about Kalsang, whom she doesn't know well: "What strange record does this character hold in the town?" Isabella decides that Kalsang currently holds the blue ribbon for best pie in Perkins. Every July, the town holds a contest, and Kalsang has won the past three years in a row, each year with a different pie. No one in the history of Perkins had ever done that before.

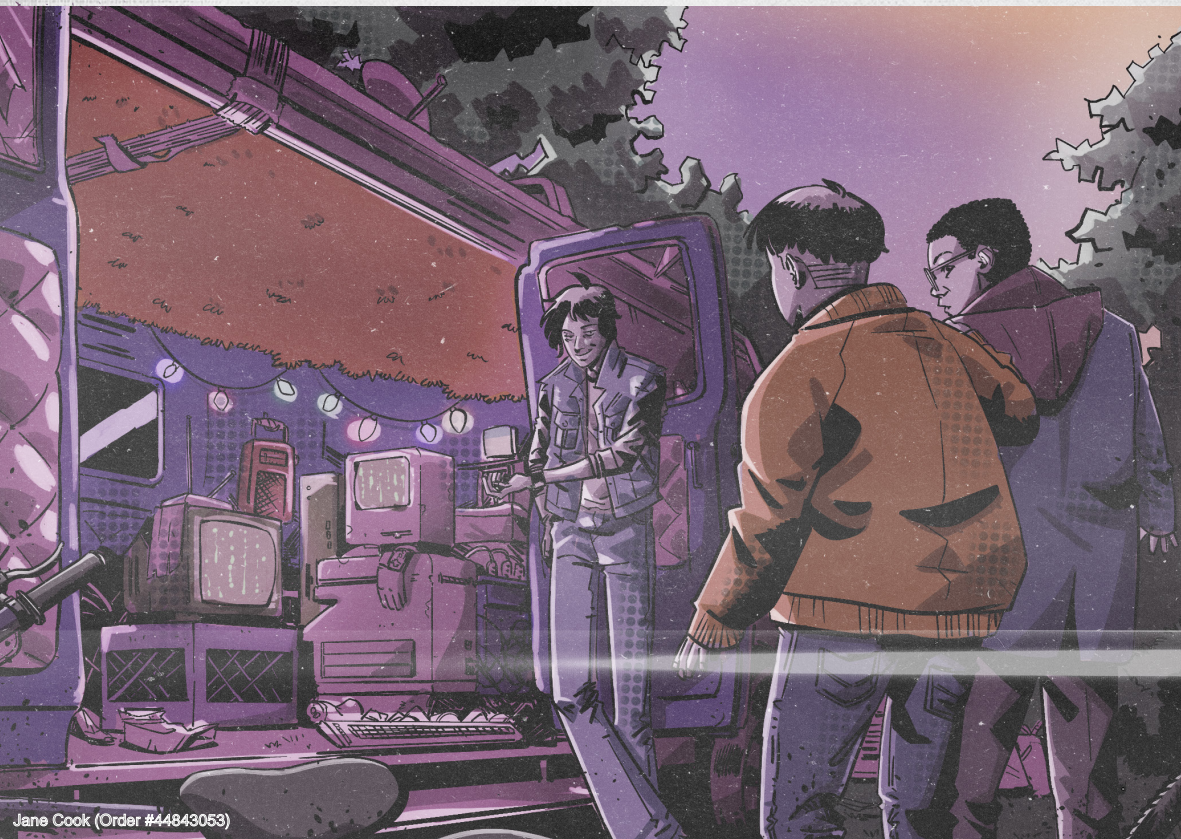
BONDED ACTIONS

For games that want to both emphasize relationships between characters and add another mechanical choice for the players, GMs and players can agree to use Bonded Actions. These are a way to focus on what a pair of characters often do together—and thus the skills that they can use in a pinch.

After answering relationship questions, you and another character who know each other very well may agree to have your characters have a Bonded Action. This benefit enables the two of you, once per session, to do something together that you've practiced, intentionally or unintentionally, many times before.

This practice will allow you to make collaborative checks more easily, given the experience that you have working together. Narratively, after selecting this Bonded Action, the two of you explain the backstory of these shared experiences, giving at least three meaningful experiences you've had together related to it and any other details you would like.

During play, you can use that Bonded Action once per session when it would make narrative sense based on your backstory. For example, two characters select "Heavy Lifters" (which gives them a +3 when they make a Brawn check together) because they're on the football team together. They could certainly apply this bonus if they're both trying to tackle an NPC or if they're trying to throw something between them. However, if they're trying



to simply pick up a car, they couldn't; picking up heavy, immobile objects isn't part of football, so they wouldn't have practiced that together.

In addition, you must both actually be able to help each other for the Bonded Action to occur. The football players above couldn't make a Bonded Action check if they're in separate locations. After all, they can't tackle someone together if they're not tackling the same person.

Mechanically, when using a Bonded Action, you gain a benefit, which can only be used once per session. Remember, the Bonded Action must make sense for the bond that the two characters have. If you don't see one in the chart that would make sense for you and another character, talk to them and the GM and make up a new one. For a list of Bonded Actions, see **Appendix I - Bonded Actions** on page 170.

If you're playing a campaign of *Kids on Bikes*, your relationships with other characters will change and grow as the campaign goes on. Between arcs, you'll have the chance to gain new Bonded Actions, change existing ones, or, if a relationship has become less close, end ones you have. Take a look at "Have Your Knacks and Bonded Actions Changed?" on page 104 for more information.

For example, while Isabella doesn't have an especially close relationship with either of the other characters, Kalsang and Oswald do. With Kalsang being older and a mentor figure to Oswald, Helpful Mentorship could make sense. They also think that Friends' Cant could work, since they've read and talked about so many fantasy novels. They decide that this is the most interesting to them, establishing that they can communicate information through references to books that they've both read and inside jokes that they have about characters and events in those texts. Even if someone has also read *The Hobbit*, they won't know the shorthand that they've developed over the years.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Now that you've fleshed out your character and your relationship with the other characters, you'll add the finishing touches.

Full Name: If you were waiting to complete your name, do that now. Keep in mind that relatives probably have the same last name—but not always. Remember to keep your name in line with the tone that you and the other players have agreed to for the game.

Motivation: Write down something that strongly motivates you. It might not be the thing that drives all of your decisions, but it should certainly drive many of them—especially your big decisions. It could be a specific motivation (e.g., "find my son no matter what it costs me" or "impress Tom so that he'll go out with me"), it could be more general, (e.g., "look cool")

or “learn”), or it could have to do with concealing some information (e.g., “don’t let the others find out that my business is failing” or “don’t let my children learn that I killed their father”). If you feel it’s appropriate for them to know, you can share this information with the other players. Most likely, you’ll just share this motivation with the GM.

Typically, children will be motivated by some kind of curiosity. Teens will often be motivated by social factors like fitting in or finding and maintaining a romantic relationship. Adults will be motivated by holding onto or protecting what they have, whether that’s a business or family. And all ages can be motivated by something or someone that they’ve lost.

Fear: Write down something that you’re afraid of. In terms of role-playing your fear, you will, of course, want to avoid your fears, and when faced with them, you’ll behave more irrationally. Ultimately, what you fear in the game is up to you. Mechanically, fears will have three effects, which we’ll talk more about in “Planned Actions and Snap Decisions” on page 52. In short, though, facing a Fear will mechanically limit your choices.

In terms of what you’re likely to fear, children usually fear things that, rationally, they shouldn’t fear and don’t fear things that they ought to. They’re more likely to walk up to a stranger covered in blood to make sure they’re okay than they are to open up their closets in the middle of the night. Generally, children fear the unknown and what they can’t see. Children are also generally not ashamed of their fears. They’ll gladly declare them to friends and strangers alike.

Teens are all over the place. Some teens are still scared of the things that scared them as children, but they’ll tend to be very tight-lipped about these fears. No teen wants to admit that they’re still scared of the dark even if plenty of them are. Often, though, teens are more scared of social isolation, losing friends, or embarrassing themselves. But sometimes, more mature teens—or ones whose lives have been rough—will have fears more like an adult’s.

Few adults have the fears that children have, and most of them aren’t worried about the kinds of social things that concern teens. Rather, they’re typically afraid of things being taken from them, whether that’s their families, their homes, or their livelihoods. Some adults also fear realistic things going wrong—and there’s nothing saying that an adult can’t be afraid of something that isn’t a “rational” fear.

Obligations: Regardless of how easy or difficult your character’s life is, they definitely have things they’re required to do. For children, that might be as simple as that they have to go to school and keep their room clean—or they could be solely responsible for caring for their younger siblings overnight any time their single father works a double at the factory. These don’t have to be tangible actions, either. A spouse of the school’s principal may feel an obligation to remain morally upright and kind to everyone so that their partner’s reputation isn’t harmed.

While these obligations won't have any mechanical impact on the game, they both give the GM something to lean on and give players a way to think more carefully about their character.

Knack: Thinking about your character's backstory, what is something that your character can always do, even when they're under pressure? This will be your Knack, something that you can do once per session without having to roll a check for it. Instead, you'll get a 10 on that check—but only once per session.

To make your Knack, think about an “-ing” verb that describes what you're good at, like “identifying local plants,” “computer programming,” or “playing soccer.”

A good way to think about Knacks is how this might help you in interesting, unexpected ways during the game. For example, having “playing soccer” as a Knack doesn't mean that you can only apply those skills during a game. You could apply this Knack when making a check to run roughly the distance of a soccer field under a certain time or when trying to keep pushing yourself physically like you have to do at soccer practice. In short, players are absolutely encouraged to apply their Knack creatively rather than narrowly. However, the application of the Knack has to make sense. If someone needs to catch something thrown at them, the Knack of “playing soccer” definitely won't help them—unless they've established that they're their team's goalie.

You'll notice on the character sheet that there is a blank space where you can write Knacks. You'll only choose 1 for now. There will be opportunities to earn more later—but you'll only ever be able to have 3 Knacks in total.

Backpack: The final finishing touch is indicating what you have in your backpack, literally and figuratively. What items are you never without? For children or teens, these might literally be in their backpack. For adults, these essential items might be in the trunk of their car. Ultimately, though, they're wherever would make the most sense for you.

Figuratively speaking, the backpack is also a good place to list advantages that you have over other people. While this doesn't have to include all of the ways that you're privileged, it would be a good place to think about the more intangible resources you have at your disposal. For example, your backpack might indicate that your parents are exceptionally supportive and do everything they can to give you the resources to succeed at school. It might indicate that your bad relationship with your parents has given you a strong sense of self-reliance and ability to do for yourself. The intangible resources in your backpack won't have a mechanical impact on the game, but they should give you places to turn if you need help in getting out of a problem—or create tension if that resource is suddenly not available.

Trope-Specific Questions: Each Trope has two questions about your character that should be answered at some point during the character creation process. So, if you haven't yet answered them, make sure to do so now.

The answers to these questions do not need to be shared with the other players at the table—but they can be if you would like to. Your comments should be shared with the GM.

For example, Kalsang Barton is motivated by protecting her son and making his life as easy as possible. The sudden loss of his father when he was only six affected him badly. Her Fear is suffocation, and she tells the table that she has had nightmares about suffocating under the earth, like she assumes her husband did when the mine collapsed. In terms of Obligations, she's of course obligated to care for and provide for her son as well as taking care of the house, though she says that Daniel is finally starting to be able to be more helpful with his chores. Beyond the tangible obligations of single parenting, though, she feels a need to provide all of the guidance to Daniel that both parents would have. In keeping with the work that she has done, she decides that her starting Knack is repairing vehicles. She carries nothing terribly special with her in a literal sense, but she carries the loss of her husband and the flexibility that she learned when she had to switch jobs.

Isabella Freeman is motivated by fitting in with the cool kids, very much in keeping with her taking the Aspiring Wannabe Trope. Her Fear is spiders, which she has been afraid of for as long as she can remember. Her parents take care of all of her tangible needs other than a few odd chores at her house; however, since they're both pillars of the community, the nearly explicit agreement is that she won't do anything to embarrass her pillars-of-the-community parents, so she bears that Obligation. She also has the self-imposed Obligation of trying to fit in with the cool kids. Her Knack, she decides, are her sweet dance moves, which have never failed her before. In her Backpack, she always carries gum to make sure that her breath is as fresh as possible. Figuratively speaking, she carries with her a feeling that her parents are disappointed in her and the concern that she'll never fit in with the cool kids.

Oswald Gates is motivated by learning as much as he possibly can in as many fields as humanly possible. His Fear is heights and falling, and his Obligation is walking his dog twice a day, but beyond that, his parents take care of everything for him. His Knack is reading and understanding quickly. He always carries his calculator and at least two books with him, since he's never reading just one book. Figuratively, he carries the advice that his grandmother gave him the last time she visited: "Be yourself, Ozzie. Nobody else can be."

BIKES

The bond between a kid and their bike is an almost sacred one. Unless you can convince a trustworthy older sibling to drive you around, it's the only way to get from one place to another without your parents knowing exactly where you are at all times.

Each character can decide if they want to build a custom bike or if they want to receive a gift bike based on their Trope and age. In the same game, it's fine for some characters to customize and some to choose gifts.

If you want to decide the details of your ride, you can elect to build your own bike. To start, choose a color and an upgrade for your bike from the options in **Appendix J - Bikes** on page 171. Each color has an adjective associated with it, which represents either what you are or what you want to be. When on your bike, you receive a specific benefit based on your bike's color. Similarly, each upgrade has a two-word phrase associated with it, which represents how someone might describe the bike itself. Simply choose one color and one upgrade, then decide how you've personalized your bike!

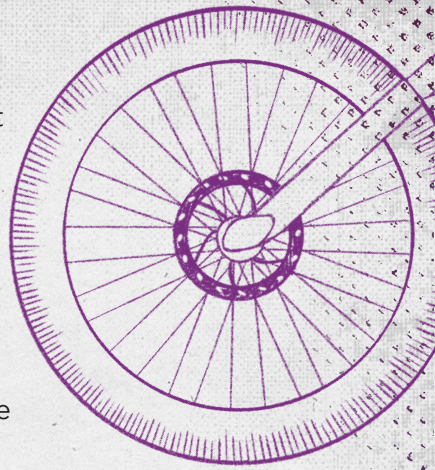
Or, if you want to get rolling more quickly or if you're feeling torn, you can elect to receive a gift bike, based on your Trope and age. See **Appendix C - Tropes** starting on page 156 for those suggestions.

Finally, figure out your bike's name, how you got it, and your favorite memory involving your bike, then share those details with the group. These stories can be as developed or brief as you'd like them to be. It all depends on how much your bike means to you.

Once you've got your kid (or teen or adult) and your bike, you're ready to start playing *Kids on Bikes*!

For example, even though Kalsang repairs cars for a living, she prefers to ride her bike to work when she can. She rides a gray bike with a banana seat, which, narratively, she needs to keep her comfortable because of her persistent injury. Mechanically, while on the bike, she cannot get lost if she knows the area, and she can carry one extra person. And, when her group meets a Powered Character, that character will be able to regain 2 PT from riding with her. She tells the story of choosing the bike after the accident, that it was the first thing that she bought for herself after the accident.

Isabella selects a red bike with tassels, giving her +2 each time she uses an Adversity Token on her bike and +1 to all checks when being chased on it. Though her bike means the freedom to get around the town, she doesn't have a cool story about how she got it. It's one that belonged to the kid of one of her parents' friends.



Oswald selects the pre-generated bike for Brilliant Mathletes: a purple bike with a basket. This allows him to treat Snap Decisions as Planned Actions while biking and allows him to have one commonplace item in his basket each session. He tells the story of how he and his father took him to pick out the bike for his last birthday and how he customized it carefully and very thoughtfully.



CHAPTER 4: PLAYING THE GAME

If you've never played a roleplaying game before, we're excited that you're playing *Kids on Bikes* as your first game! While it can sound intimidating, roleplaying becomes pretty intuitive pretty quickly. In short, when you roleplay, you're taking on the role of a character, someone like you in some ways and unlike you in others. Rather than always doing what you, the player, think is best, you'll be doing what your character would most likely do in that moment. Generally speaking, you'll be responding to the situations and circumstances that the GM puts in front of you. There isn't really any way to roleplay "correctly"—as long as everyone at the table's having a good time!

During *Kids on Bikes* specifically, you, the other players, and the GM will tell the story together. The GM will help guide the action of the story and will make the "big picture" stuff happen, often by asking questions or putting your characters into situations, but you'll have a lot of control over what you do and how you face the situations the GM throws in your way. Often, the GM will even give you some say over decisions outside of your character.

You'll even have control over which parts you skip over. If your characters are going to have a pretty run-of-the-mill day at school, you don't need to tell the story of all nine periods. Think of the game as the important scenes that will carry the narrative forward. Focus on the parts that promote action, excitement, and intrigue.

The main thing to focus on, whether this is your first or three hundred thirty first time playing a roleplaying game, is having fun with everyone at the table. Do that and you'll be roleplaying correctly.

ENCOURAGING COLLABORATIVE PLAY

While the expectations you set up and the town you created in Session Zero will help to steer your game to what you all want, it's also important to think about how you'll play with each other. These tips on playing collaboratively will help keep your game going in the best direction possible.

NO ONE GETS LEFT BEHIND

If one person stops their bike, everyone stops. The same rules apply to playing games together. Abandoning each other isn't an option. When you play games together, sometimes a story line can threaten to run off and leave someone behind. This means the player may have nothing to do.

Similarly, a player may feel disconnected from the story or like their ideas don't matter. Paying attention to your fellow players and your GM is everyone's responsibility. Help bring anyone you see being left behind back

into the fiction by asking what they want to do, what interests them, and what part of the story they want to focus on for a while. All of you need to be having a positive experience for the game to succeed for any of you.

If you feel like you're being left out or left behind, speak up. It's vital that you advocate for yourself and work together with the table to make sure you and everyone else are having a good time. Try offering some ideas on what would help you get back into the game, or talk about what's got you feeling left behind and work with everyone to find a solution.

TAKING TURNS

In a game with multiple main characters, learning to be invested in everyone and sharing the spotlight is key. Each of you should feel like you get about equal spotlight time. Some weeks certain characters may shine more, but it should never feel like there are secondary or tertiary characters.

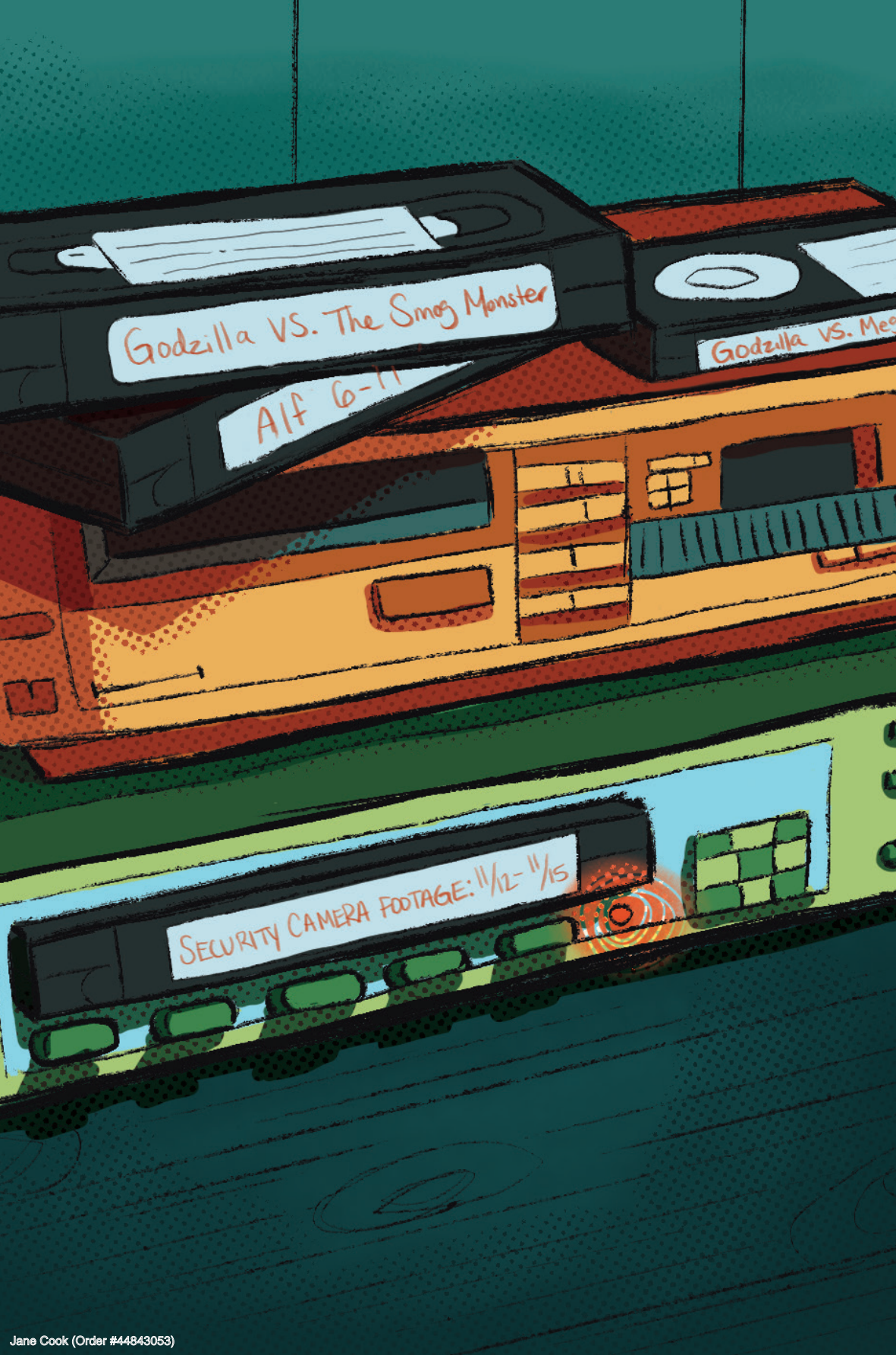
Even as a player, make sure you give everyone time to shine. If you realize that you're making your character have most of the fun, step aside and let the other characters take center stage. Your GM, too, will offer those moments in the game so they can show off how great they are and impact the story directly.

But also remember that some players aren't comfortable having their characters in the spotlight. Ultimately, it's about giving everyone the time and focus they want, not necessarily equal time and focus. All of you (both players and GM) should make sure to check in regularly with players about how the spotlight is shared, and you should always feel comfortable saying something if you want more or less attention.

EMBRACING IMPROV

There are two major rules of improv that are useful when playing role playing games together. Both you and the GM should use them together to help prevent story stagnation and to help incorporate everyone's ideas into the story. These are designed to be used instead of shutting someone down by saying "no" and adding nothing else.

- "Yes, and..." is for when you like someone's idea and want to add to it or adjust it. A person will state their idea, and you respond with a yes, but also add your own ideas to it, building onto the initial thought. This allows you to incorporate your thoughts while also still running with their idea.
- "No, but..." is for when you don't want to use their idea, but want to offer something instead along the same lines in terms of theme or function. After saying no, suggest another idea influenced by what they suggested, while removing the part that you found unsuitable to the game.



Godzilla VS. The Smog Monster

AIF 6-11

Godzilla VS. Meg

SECURITY CAMERA FOOTAGE: 11/12-11/15

STAT CHECKS

While you're playing, any time you do something that runs the risk of failure, the GM will have you make a Stat Check. First, you'll let the GM know what you want to do and agree on a stat that you'll use. Then, they'll set a numerical difficulty for the action and let you know what it is. Then, if you decide you want to go ahead with the check, you'll roll the appropriate stat die and check the value of that die against the difficulty.

If you roll the maximum value of the die, you get a Lucky Break—meaning that you reroll the die and add the maximum value that you rolled the first time to the new roll. You can get multiple Lucky Breaks on a single check. For more on these surprising successes, see “Lucky Breaks” on page 50.

After you've finished rolling, you and any players whose characters are with you may spend Adversity Tokens to increase your result. For details, see “Adversity Tokens” on page 49.

Keep in mind that the most you can roll (without a Lucky Break or spending Adversity Tokens) is 20, and that number is extraordinarily unlikely. However, that doesn't mean that the difficulty can't be higher than 20 in cases where a feat seems truly impossible for mere mortals.

Difficulty	Explanation & Examples
20 or greater	A task at which only the most incredible could even possibly succeed—but if they succeed, it will be one of the most impressive things a character has ever done. This is a nearly guaranteed failure. <i>Examples: Lifting a car off of someone trapped under it; solving a nearly impossible math problem just by glancing at it.</i>
17 to 19	A task where success would be incredible and impressive. This, too, is a nearly guaranteed failure. <i>Examples: Talking a police officer out of arresting you when you have clearly broken the law and have no relationship with the officer; breaking a school record in track.</i>
13 to 16	A task where success is extraordinary—but decidedly possible for those who are truly skilled at it. <i>Examples: Doing a flying side kick into the center of a wildly swinging punching bag; withstanding a police interrogation.</i>
10 to 12	A task where success is impressive—but unsurprising for those skilled at it. <i>Examples: A strong person prying open a heavy, locked door; a computer whiz repairing a computer quickly under pressure.</i>

Difficulty	Explanation & Examples
7 to 9	A task where success is almost certain for those very skilled at it—but not for those who aren't. <i>Examples: Convincing the principal that it wasn't you and your friends who started the cafeteria food fight; running a message from one end of a building to the other in a very short time.</i>
3 to 6	A task where success is likely for all but those who aren't skilled or have a low stat in that field. <i>Examples: Throwing a good punch into punching bag; a character silently withstanding a verbal berating.</i>
1 or 2	A task where success is nearly guaranteed, except in extreme cases. <i>Examples: A character lifting a 10-pound weight over their head; a character reciting a multiplication table.</i>

CHOOSING A STAT FOR THE CHECK

As in life, there are always multiple ways to solve a problem. If a character is being confronted by bullies, it may seem like they have to start swinging and hope it goes well (Fight) or turn heel and run and hope they're faster than the bullies (Flight). But depending on who the character is, they might use other stats instead.

A character with high Charm might convince the bullies that they'll share a secret entrance into the movie theater if they don't beat them up. A character with high Grit might tell them that they have taken worse beatings before breakfast and make it not seem worth the aggressor's time. A character with high Brains might talk the bullies in circles until they let them go because the bullies are too confused to throw a punch. A character with high Brawn might physically intimidate their aggressors to get them to back down. There are always multiple ways you can solve your problems.

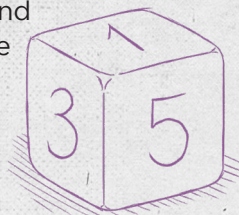
When you're not sure what kind of check something will call for, you can always just describe what you're doing and the GM will tell you what stat to use and the difficulty of the check.

Generally, for things like deceit and lying, you'll be using Charm if you're being a smooth talker or Grit if you're using your street smarts to seem more knowledgeable than you really are. But if you're throwing around a lot of science-y words to convince the sheriff that the mine shaft where you're actually hiding the half-goat, half-child creature is structurally unsound so he should stay away, that might be Brains. Or if you're threatening your way into a secure area past a young, scared guard, that might be Brawn—or Fight if you're describing the eight ways you could maim him with your index finger thanks to your years of martial arts training. The bottom line

is that the stats are here to help guide your storytelling and help you have fun. If you aren't sure what to do, ask the table—and if they aren't sure, go with your gut.

FAILING A ROLL

Remember, in *Kids on Bikes*, failing a roll isn't all bad. First and foremost, it gives you an Adversity Token, which you can use to succeed when you really need it—especially if you pool it with other Adversity Tokens—or to activate your character's Strengths. Adversity Tokens (or ATs) give you more options later on, so sometimes, failing is actually a good thing.



Second, failure can and should push the narrative forward. A failed roll means that what the character wants to happen doesn't happen—but that doesn't mean that what happens is bad for the story. For example, if the characters try to hack a computer but aren't able to, it might mean that they have to seek out an NPC to help them with it. That character might, in turn, inadvertently give them a clue that helps them puzzle out a mystery. Or, if a character fails to escape on foot from government forces pursuing her, she might be brought to a facility that holds the secret to the next part of the adventure.

So, while failures won't be what your character wants, they should almost always feel good for the story—and should give the group more directions to take the narrative you're building together.

For example, Isabella hears a rumor that Daniel was going to go explore the mines, and the next day at school, she sees that he isn't sitting with Oswald at lunch. When she tells Oswald about this rumor, he says that they need to go to the auto repair shop and tell Kalsang right away, but it's the middle of the school day. They decide that they're going to leave school, but they need to decide the best way to approach leaving. Narratively, Oswald pushes for telling Principal Worthy and asking her permission—but he acknowledges that his Charm isn't great. Isabella's is a d10, which isn't bad, but she suggests that they instead just try to sneak out during lunch. The GM tells them that the Charm check to convince Principal Worthy would be a difficulty of 13. You can't just ask the principal to leave school, after all. Only one character would have to do the convincing, though. Sneaking out, on the other hand, would be a Flight check of 8, but they both have to succeed at that check.

They opt to try to sneak out, and Isabella rolls first, getting a 10. Success! She sneaks out a side door. Oswald, however, rolls a 6. A narrow failure with no bad consequences, but he's stopped heading out of the door by Mr. Roachman, the strictest teacher at the school. He takes an Adversity Token that he can use later, either to improve a roll or to activate a Strength.

ADVERSITY TOKENS

In addition to helping the story move forward in unexpected directions, failing a roll also helps you by giving you an Adversity Token. Adversity Tokens (or AT) help you in three ways. First, you can use them to improve subsequent rolls. Second, you can use them to activate Strengths, some of which require that you spend AT. Third, with the GM's permission, you can use AT to ignore your Fears.

After rolling to try to make a check, you can spend your AT to improve the roll. This improvement can make a failure into a success, make your failure less harmful, or make your success more extreme. In addition, characters in the same scene as a character making a check may spend AT to improve that character's roll. Unless you have a Strength that indicates otherwise, each AT you spend adds one to your roll or the roll of the character you're helping. So, spending 2 AT would change a rolled 5 to a 7.

If you're spending AT to improve your own roll, explain narratively how previous difficulties have prepared you to better face this challenge. Those previous difficulties don't have to relate to how you earned those Adversity Tokens, though they could. If you're spending AT to help a character your character is with, explain the advice you give them and, collaboratively, explain how that advice saves the day.

Another way to use AT is to activate Strengths. Many of them have AT costs associated with them, requiring that you spend AT to use them. Consult the Strengths chart in **Appendix D** on page 165 to see what those costs are.

Finally, in especially pivotal moments, your GM may allow you to spend AT to ignore your Fear. For more information on that, see "Facing Your Fears" on page 56.

At the start of the game, each of you has 3 AT, and you'll earn more as you tell your story, so use them frequently!

For example, as Isabella slips outside, she looks over her shoulder to see if Oswald made it out. As she does, she runs directly into her English teacher, Ms. McKay. "Careful, kiddo," she says, then pauses. "Are you okay? You're not leaving during lunch, are you? That would be a school rule violation!" Isabella decides to attempt a Charm check to see if she can convince Ms. McKay to let her go. Gauthier explains that Ms. McKay is one of the more laid-back teachers at the school, but success is far from assured. He sets the difficulty at 8. Isabella rolls a 6, and decides that it's important enough to her to succeed that she spends 2 AT to bump herself up to a success.

"Oh, I just needed to get something from my bike," she replies. Gauthier encourages her to pedal harder, reminding her that with AT, you should explain how something you learned before helps you now. "Okay, Ms. McKay, I won't lie to you: I'm ditching school. I got stuff I need to do, and in

class the other day, you were telling us that we needed to live more wildly, right? Well, uh, off I go! Living wildly!”

Ms. McKay smiles. “Then I didn’t see anything, you absolute maniac of a child. I never saw you. Get out of here. Live freely!” She heads back into the school, walking through the door Isabella just came out of.

LUCKY BREAKS

When you roll the highest value on a die, you roll that die again and add the results together to get the total for your check. If you roll the maximum value of the die multiple times, you get to keep rolling. Spending AT to improve the sum of a roll does not cause a Lucky Break; they only occur if you naturally roll the highest value.

When you get a Lucky Break, the way you succeed must reflect that you have accomplished something beyond what you could do on your own. The outcome should be influenced, in part, by external forces. This could be something fortunate that happens to assist you or something unfortunate that affects your adversary or the obstacle you face. Work with your GM to narrate the story of this roll.

For example, Mr. Roachman starts grilling Oswald about why he’s leaving, so he sees two reasonable options here: just start running with a Flight check or try to talk his way out of it with a Charm check. Running to the bike racks, unlocking his bike in time, and getting away without being caught will be very tough: a Flight check with a difficulty of 15. With a d12 in Flight, Oswald would need a Lucky Break. However, convincing him that he needs to go get something that he left in his bike is easier, but still not a piece of cake given how crusty Roachman is. The GM tells him it will be a Charm check with a difficulty of 10. He’ll need a Lucky Break here, too, but he’s more likely to get it, so he decides to try to charm his way out of it. He rolls an 8 and gets the Lucky Break! Then, he rolls a 3 for a total of 11: a success!

Oswald explains that he tells Mr. Roachman, as casually as he can, that he just has to grab something out of his bike, trying to pass it off like nothing and make it seem like not a big deal at all. Roachman starts to tell him that non-seniors aren’t allowed to leave school grounds, when Ms. McKay passes by and casually says, “Oh give it a rest, Harold. You’re a hardass. We all get it.” Mr. Roachman turns bright red and storms down the hall after her, incensed that she’d undermine him in front of a student. Oswald breathes a sigh of relief that he was lucky enough to have Ms. McKay happen to be there, and heads out the door to meet Isabella.



TIERED CHECKS

In some cases, success and failure could be along even more of a spectrum than they already are, and it might be impossible to fully fail a check. In such cases, your game could include tiered checks, ones where there's no chance of failure and the value of your roll will determine what you get out of the check. Good examples of tiered checks would be ones where a character is trying to do something as quickly as possible, as smoothly as possible, or faster than another character. Or, if there are degrees of success, that could call for a tiered check, too. If, for example, characters have the afternoon to search the library for information about livestock that went missing two decades ago, they'll definitely find something, but a check will determine just how much.

When performing a tiered check, failure is off the table, so there will be no possibility for consequences. However, there is no possibility to earn an Adversity Token on a Tiered Check. It's a completely safe check for your character. The worst that could happen is that you don't get as much good out of the check as you hoped to.

For example, as Isabella and Oswald get to their bikes, Oswald remembers how the two of them used to race to unlock their bikes when they were younger and still hung out. He says the same thing they said to each other hundreds of times: "I'm going to ride off first." Isabella, despite herself, smiles and lunges for her combination lock. Gauthier announces that, if they're going to race, this will be a tiered check. The better their role, the faster they'll get on the bike, but there's no possibility of failing to get their locks open. He also announces that he thinks they should use Flight, and both agree. Isabella rolls a 13, and Oswald rolls a 7, so she wins the race. "Let's go, Pokey," she calls, already ten feet away when Oswald's lock clicks open.

PLANNED ACTIONS AND SNAP DECISIONS

Although the GM always sets a numerical difficulty, there are two distinct kinds of stat checks: Planned Actions and Snap Decisions. Planned Actions are stat checks when you have time to think about the best course of action and, perhaps, work with your friends. If the characters are sitting at a kitchen table trying to break a coded message that someone left for them and have all night to do it, that's definitely a Planned Action. If your character needs to climb up a wall to sneak into an abandoned factory and has the cover of night and no one in pursuit, that's a Planned Action. In short, Planned Actions are when the conditions are relatively optimal to achieve something.

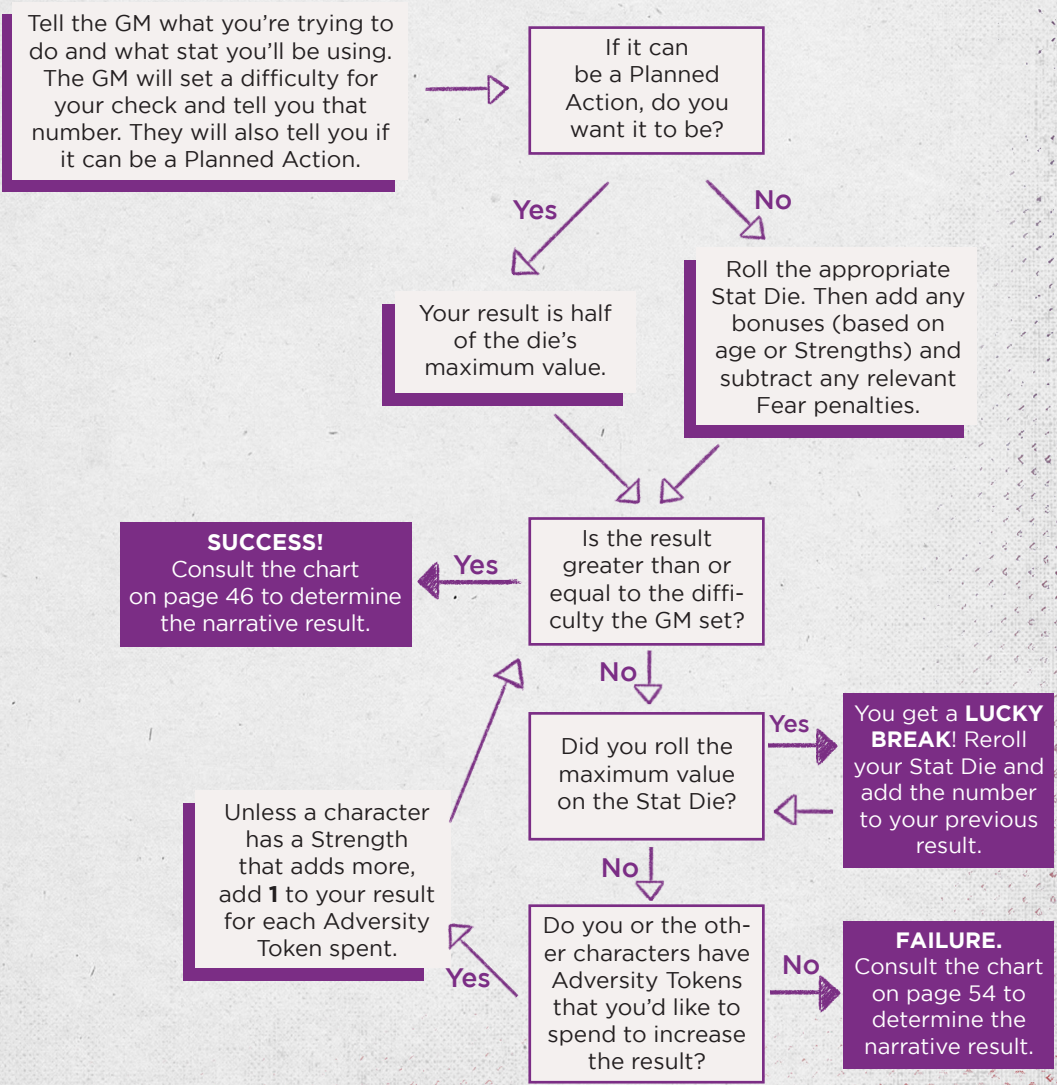
Snap Decisions, on the other hand, are choices that have to be made quickly under bad conditions—and are thus more chaotic and unpredictable. If your character is being chased through a cave, stat checks they make while

fleeing in panic will definitely be Snap Decisions. If your character is under any kind of great pressure, that would likely be a Snap Decision, too.

Remember, each of you has at least 1 Knack, discussed on page 39, that allows you to take a 10 on a check relevant to your Knack rather than rolling. This can be used during a Planned Action or a Snap Decision. Remember, you and the GM should interpret a Knack broadly, not narrowly. At the same time, though, make sure it actually makes sense to apply your Knack.

It's the GM's call whether something is a Planned Action or a Snap Decision. Players, though, should feel free to try to convince the GM of how they can get a moment of calm to make a Planned Action in a setting that might seem to call for a Snap Decision.

In order to make a check, go through the following flow chart:



CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILURES

In *Kids on Bikes*, success and failure are not binary. Although earning an Adversity Token is based on rolling above or below your target, what happens after is a little more complicated. The good that results from a success and the bad that occurs from a failure depend on how far the rolled number is from the target number. Tremendous successes bring unexpected benefits; staggering failures bring unanticipated consequences.

No matter what happens, the result of a roll should push the story forward. When you succeed at a check, the story should move in a direction that both the characters and the players want it to. But even if you fail a role, in narrating with the GM what happens, think about ways to progress the story in directions that the players want—but ones that the characters, probably, don't want. Regardless, the story needs to continue to be one that the players want to be a part of.

When deciding on the consequences of a stat check, GMs should consult the following guide:

(Roll + Modifiers) - Target	Guidelines for Failure or Success
+10 or higher	The character succeeds smoothly and easily. Likely, it looks like the character is just showing off, or that the task is done so readily that it happens without any effort at all. At the GM's discretion (and certainly not necessarily), there could be some unexpected positive results from a success of this degree.
+5 to +9	The character succeeds quite impressively. At the GM's discretion, the character might have some additional benefits beyond the success, but these will be slight—and only if important for pushing the game forward.
+1 to +4	The character succeeds, but not impressively. Any benefits the character gains above and beyond the success should be quite limited—if present at all.
0	The character succeeds, but just barely. Decidedly, nothing surprising happens—and the player and the GM should make this success as skin-of-the-teeth as possible.
-4 to -1	The character fails, but not too badly. There might be some very, very minor short-term consequences, but these won't shift the story for more than a minute or two. The character has tried and almost succeeded.

(Roll + Modifiers) - Target	Guidelines for Failure or Success
-9 to -5	The failure is bad, but not a disaster. There will be some short-term consequences that might lead to some immediate difficulties—but nothing that the character can't handle if they focus on them. The character has tried to do or has been forced to do something beyond their capabilities. And, not surprisingly, they've failed.
-14 to -10	The failure is profound. There will be consequences for this failure, likely in keeping with what would be expected, but that doesn't mean that those consequences won't be very bad. These consequences may strongly influence the course of the current play session. Generally, though, characters will only find themselves failing this badly when they bite off more than they can chew—or because the GM has a reason for them to fail.
-15 or lower	The failure is staggering and catastrophic. There will be both immediate and long-term consequences for this failure, above and beyond what might be expected. These consequences might lead to serious changes in the course of the long-term arc of the story—especially because the character should only find themselves failing this badly through total recklessness or because the GM has purposefully put them in a staggeringly difficult situation.

For example, Isabella and Oswald are biking to where Kalsang works when Peter, who was expelled from Perkins High last year for picking too many fights, sees them and decides to start some trouble. Gauthier lets them know that getting away by pedaling would either be a Flight check or a Brawn check—but that if they want to do something else to stop Peter from pursuing them, they can—and sets the difficulty of Flight or Brawn checks at 6.

Oswald decides to make a Flight check, and since he has a purple bike, he can treat Snap Decisions as Planned Actions. Half of his Flight is 6, so Oswald just makes the check with a Planned Action on his Flight. He narrates how he escapes narrowly, just barely swerving his bike around a pothole that would have knocked him off.

Isabella does the same, but she has to roll. She has tassels on her bike, so she gets +1 to checks while being chased. Flight is her d20 stat, but she only rolls a 2 (for a total of 3 with her bike's bonus). Her red bike allows her to get +2 for every AT spent while biking, but she decides to fail the roll instead. She gains another AT, but she'll have to face the consequences of Peter catching up to her.

FACING YOUR FEARS

As established during character creation, each of you has a Fear that will both guide your roleplaying and have some mechanical implications. Specifically, when facing your Fear:

1. You must make Snap Decisions.
2. You cannot spend Adversity Tokens to help your friends (though they can spend Adversity Tokens to help you).
3. Depending on the severity of the Fear, you may have to make checks at up to a -3 penalty.

To start, “facing your Fear” means that you are in a situation where the thing you fear is present. If you’re afraid of snakes, this could range from seeing a snake slither across your path in the forest to falling into a pit of them. If you’re afraid of disappointing your parents, this could range from finding yourself in a situation similar to one where you feel you’ve failed them before to having to face them after doing something you’re sure will disappoint them.

The first implication of *facing your Fear* is that you must make all of your checks as Snap Decisions, even if you have a relevant Knack. When confronting what scares you, your adrenaline is pumping, which keeps you from being able to think or act carefully and thus keeps you from taking Planned Actions or drawing on your best talents most effectively.



The second implication is that you cannot use Adversity Tokens to help out your friends. You're too focused on getting yourself out of the situation that's scaring you to think about them right now. As with all of your checks, you may still spend Adversity Tokens to improve your own rolls. Your friends, too, can still spend Adversity Tokens to help you—provided that you don't both suffer from the same Fear.

Finally, depending on the severity of the exposure to your Fear, you may suffer a penalty of up to -3 on all checks made while exposed to your Fear. If panic sets in, you won't be thinking clearly enough to function at your best. The severity of the penalty will be up to the GM, but here are a few suggestions:

- Don't apply penalties for non-persistent instances of the thing you're afraid of. For example, seeing a snake slither across your path doesn't mean that all checks made for the rest of the session will have a penalty. A brief instance of witnessing your fear might only apply to one or two checks.
- A -1 penalty is good for when the fear is persistent but, at least rationally, irrelevant. If you're trying to hack into a computer next to a sealed terrarium with a big snake in it, you might not perform quite at your best.
- A -2 penalty is good for when the fear is persistent and possibly relevant. For example, if the snake is loose in the office while you're trying to hack the computer, you're going to be pretty preoccupied with that.
- A -3 penalty is good for when the fear is persistent and overwhelming. For example, if multiple snakes are loose in the room while you're trying to hack the computer and they're slithering over you, you're going to be focused on little else than getting away from them and certainly not thinking clearly.

With the GM's permission (or if you have the Heroic Strength), players may spend Adversity Tokens to ignore their fear, which they must do prior to rolling any checks. The cost of doing so should be 1 Adversity Token per -1 penalty to rolls. So, ignoring a persistent and overwhelming instance of your fear should cost 3 Adversity Tokens while ignoring a persistent but, at least rationally, irrelevant instance should cost only 1 Adversity Token. Once you spend these tokens, ignore all three mechanical implications of the fear for the duration of the scene.

For example, across town, Kalsang is working at her shop when she hears the door open. Before she can roll herself from under the car to see who's there, the car starts to lower, and she shouts, "Someone's under here!" She sees a pair of muddy boots standing by the lever to lower it and hears a low, gravelly voice say, "I know." She realizes that there's a very real chance that she could be crushed under this car, which causes her to become afraid of suffocating. This is a persistent and overwhelming fear, so all of

her checks will be at -3. The GM tells her that it will be a Flight check of 11 to get out.

Her Flight is her lowest stat, and all of her checks are at a -3. She and the GM agree that rolling herself from under the car would fall under her being Skilled at Car Repair, so she'll get a +3 to that, counterbalancing her Fear penalty. She rolls a 3, failing her check by 8. She is trapped under the car, and one of her arms gets wedged underneath the car, preventing her from moving it.

DOING HARM

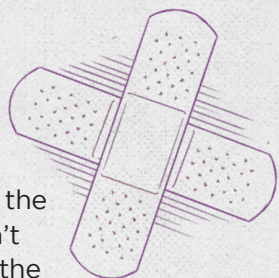
In narratives, when one character actively tries to harm another character, things have gotten bad. They've progressed (or regressed) to a point where a calm, reasoned option is no longer possible. Simply put, any effort to do harm alters the course of any narrative. Because of that, you need to approach harm, whether physical or emotional, with care in *Kids on Bikes*. Physical and emotional violence, where the actor wants to do bodily or mental harm to their target, must be handled with care in games. This goes beyond the kind of playful shoving and teasing that friends may do with each other and into times when the intent is to hurt.

As with all other checks in *Kids on Bikes*, you always have the ability to handle situations where either kind of violence could occur in multiple ways. Even if the GM puts a character in your way who clearly wants to hurt you, you could try to avoid the altercation using any of your stats and your creativity.

When you decide, though, that you want to *harm* another character, you're altering the narrative of the game regardless of whether you're successful or not. Such efforts to cause harm, whether by a PC or an NPC, should resolve in a single check. Rather than trading blow after blow by making contested stat check after contested stat check, you will establish the risks, make one contested check, then narrate the results.

When thinking about attempting to cause harm in the game, there are three things to confirm before even entertaining it for a character:

1. During Session Zero, players also indicated their willingness or unwillingness to have harm occur in the game, even if they're not involved. If any player isn't willing to have characters trying to cause harm at the table, then the narrative needs to take a different direction. A good idea might be to have that player's character step in and try to mediate between the two players to move the story in a different direction.
2. Also during Session Zero, players would have indicated whether they're willing to have their character attempt to cause harm in the game—and the kinds of harm that they're willing to participate in



(physical or emotional). If a player isn't willing to have their character involved, then the narrative needs to take a different direction.

3. In *Kids on Bikes*, the assumption is that any violence, even if it's not intended to cause harm, can only take place between characters in the same age bracket (between a child and another child, for example) or with two years' or fewer between their ages (between a 19-year-old teen and a 21-year-old adult). If everyone at your table would all like to go against this assumption, make sure that it's something everyone at the table has agreed to.

Whether the violence meant to cause harm is between two player's characters or a PC and an NPC, the GM will make sure that the stakes for the combat are clear by going through the following process:

1. *First, the player controlling the instigating character explains the kind of harm they plan to do, including which stat they plan to use.*
 - ~ In this step, the player explains what their character plans to do, whether that's punching a bully to break their nose or verbally tearing into an NPC's insecurities. There are always different approaches a character could take in enacting violence, and the stat the character uses should reflect that.
2. *If the violence is instigated by a player, the GM will tell the players what will inescapably happen to the group if they go through with it, then check pressure to confirm that all players at the table are comfortable with the attempted harm and the risk. This includes the GM.*
 - ~ Any time any character tries to cause physical or emotional harm, there should be big stakes for not just them but the party as a whole. To start this process, the GM will let the players know what will happen to the group if they go through with it. For example, verbally tearing into an NPC may or may not get you what you need, but they'll never look at you the same way again. Any friendship you have with them will assuredly suffer.
 - ~ It's vital for everyone at the table to understand that no matter what happens with the rolls, this is a consequence that the group *will* suffer. Attempts to cause harm always have consequences, even if you "win".
 - ~ If anyone is not comfortable with the consequences, their character should step in and resolve the conflict in another way, or the group can *backpedal* and go in a different direction.
 - ~ **Note:** If the harm is instigated by an NPC, the GM does not need to set these inescapable consequences.

3. *The GM will ask the player controlling the character attempting the harm, "What are you personally risking, and what are you hoping to gain?"*
 - When a character attempts harm, they have to accept some degree of risk for them directly, whether that's reciprocated physical harm or embarrassment in front of others. If the GM thinks the consequences need to be more serious, they can ask the player to *pedal harder*. If any of these stakes are unacceptable to anyone at the table, they can of course ask the player to *backpedal* or *coast*.
4. *The GM will then ask the player controlling the character being targeted, "What are you risking, and what are you hoping to gain?" The player should also indicate the stat they're planning to use to respond to or try to avoid the harm.*
 - In addition to being one more chance for the targeted character's player to agree to this possible harm, this is their chance to set the stakes for their character, just as the instigating character's player has to do. And again, if the GM thinks the consequences need to be more serious, they can ask the player to *pedal harder* on those potential consequences. If any of these stakes are unacceptable to anyone at the table, they can of course ask the player to *backpedal* or *coast*.
 - If the character being attacked is an NPC, the GM will go through this same process, sharing with the table just as a player would do if their PC was attacked.
5. *Once the stakes and the stats are clear, players roll to determine who controls the outcome, then the "winning" character's player and the GM narrate the consequences.*
 - If the instigating character's roll is better, their player decides who "wins" the conflict (meaning that they gain what they were hoping to gain) and who "loses" the conflict (meaning that they give up what they were risking).
 - In the end, the player doesn't have to decide that their character wins. They could instead decide that:
 - the same character both wins and loses,
 - that both characters lose and neither wins,
 - that both characters lose and only one wins,
 - or that both characters lose and both characters win.
 - To put it another way, the only requirement is that, when violence occurs, at least one of the characters gives up what they risked.

- ~ Alternatively, if the targeted character's roll is better, their player makes these decisions.
- ~ In either case, both players share the narration of what happens to their characters within the bounds of what the "winner" establishes as consequences.
- ~ Whichever character's player rolled higher tells the story of the consequences, accepting input from other characters and getting their reactions to what occurs.
- ~ In addition, the GM narrates the consequences of the violence for the whole group.

For example, Peter catches up with Isabella, and Gauthier, the GM, announces that Peter plans to attack her physically by riding up next to her and shoving her off of her bike, causing her to get a skinned elbow and to shred the knees on her new jeans. This will be a Fight roll. Because an NPC is attempting harm, there do not need to be any consequences for the group, and Gauthier decides not to set any. He announces that Peter is risking causing a fall and scrapes to happen to him, too—but also that an adult might see him and yell at him for picking on a younger kid. Everyone at the table agrees that they're comfortable with these possible consequences.

Isabella says that she wants to knock Peter off his bike in response to prevent him from getting her. Isabella and Gauthier agree that this, too, is a Fight check. For risks, she's risking the injury Gauthier described and embarrassment that Oswald would now be better dressed than she is. The GM tells her to pedal harder, asking her to lean into the consequences more because she's trying to cause harm in response. Isabella clarifies that she's not trying to harm Peter, just stop him physically for long enough that she and Oswald can get away—and maybe make it clear that she's not an easy target for his bullying. Still, she offers that if she's unsuccessful, she could land on her wrist, spraining it. The GM and other players agree that this is a good risk for what she's trying to gain.

The GM rolls Peter's Fight and gets a 2. Isabella rolls a 5. Even though she won the roll, Breanna decides that having Isabella tear her jeans is too good to pass up, so she decides that she's going to have that happen. In addition, she likes the consequences that Gauthier laid out for Peter: hurting himself and getting in trouble with an adult. She narrates how Peter closes in on her and shoves her, her jeans getting caught in her bike's chain at her ankle as she wildly swerves away. Before he can shove her again, though, Old Mrs. Herkle shouts from her nearby front porch, "Peter Endicott, are you shoving that little girl? You know I see your mother for bridge tomorrow. What do you think I'm going to tell her?" Startled, Peter veers away too quickly and falls off his bike. He rolls awkwardly into the middle of the road, cursing under his breath at both his bike and Isabella. As he gives her a look that

guarantees he'll get back at her, Isabella pedals off to catch up with Oswald so they can get to Kalsang's garage.

Moments later, a few blocks away, Kalsang hears the mysterious figure pull something from a shelf near him. He taps it against the body of the car she's trapped under. It sounds like a pipe. "Now then, Mrs. Barton, I'd like to cut right to the chase. I know you know what caused the mine's collapse. You built the machine that made it all happen. I just want to know why."

"I have no idea what you're talking about, please," she says, trying to pull her arm free but not quite able to do so. "I don't have any idea what happened that day. I was almost killed, too." The GM decides to have her roll a Charm check to convince the mysterious figure that she's telling the truth, with a difficulty of 10. She and the GM agree that a short-term consequence of the failure might be the mysterious figure trying to attack her physically. Before she rolls, the GM confirms that Kalsang is willing to have the combat, which could cause harm, occur, though they'll establish risks and specific goals of that fight if it's necessary. Everyone at the table agrees.

Kalsang rolls the Charm check, getting a 2. They establish that her mysterious assailant is using Fight, hoping to harm her enough that she goes with him without further resistance. He's risking making enough noise that others hear it and come to investigate. Kalsang offers to risk breaking her arm while defending herself, which would be a Grit check. If she's successful, though, she's hoping to show her attacker that she's tough enough that physical attacks aren't going to work against her. Everyone agrees, and the rolling proceeds.

The attacker gets a 13, and Gauthier narrates how the stranger grabs the car, tips it upward with inhuman strength, and grabs Kalsang by the leg and yanks her out as she gets her arm free just in time. Kalsang gets a 14, and explains that she manages to get her forearms blocking her face a split second before the assailant brings the pipe down on them. The force of the hit is so great that her forearms feel like they might be broken, but they hold. Kalsang now kicks her feet, trying to take the figure's legs out so that she can get away, but the kick, thrown wildly, grazes his shin, but he doesn't move. She throws a nearby wrench at his head, missing him but sending it flying into a table of spare parts, car parts clattering loudly to the shop's concrete floor.

At that moment, Isabella and Oswald rush into the shop. The mysterious figure hears the door open and, not waiting to see who just came in, takes off out of the back of the shop. Kalsang rubs her arms, wincing. They'll be bruised, but it was better than taking a pipe to the face. Oswald and Isabella burst into the room. "Mrs. Barton!! Daniel wasn't at school today and... are you okay!?"

SPENDING MONEY

Since your game is likely going to take place in a town with a functioning monetary economy, you might want to buy something to help you in your efforts. It should be assumed that you have access to money. However, the degree of access you have depends on your age and in-game socio-economic status.

Children cannot have jobs and thus have almost no access to money beyond what is given to them. If they need to buy something, they almost certainly need to find someone to get it for them. Under rare circumstances, they might have saved enough to buy a small item. Remember, the exact amount depends on the era in which you're playing and whether or not you have the Wealthy Strength. It is also likely to depend on the age of the child. A six-year-old child would never have the same access to money that a forty-year-old adult would.

Teens have limited access to money, but they can probably afford necessities for a few days, depending on their socio-economic status. Most teens won't be able to buy a car outright, but they could certainly have enough saved to get a hotel room for a few days. They might, though, be able to convince their parents to give them some money.

Adults have much more access to money than teens and can, within reason, buy what they need to buy. If they needed to buy a car in a pinch, they most likely could—though that might represent a significant sacrifice for them. In terms of money for adults, their group will have the most variance, which will be based on their job. But remember, in order to be wealthy in the story of your game, even an adult with a traditionally high-paying job must take the Wealthy strength.



CHAPTER 5: POWERED CHARACTERS

Players cannot create a character with powers to play throughout the campaign. But, early in the first session, the GM will introduce a Powered Character that will then be co-controlled by all of you.

INTRODUCING & PLAYING POWERED CHARACTERS

When the Powered Character is first introduced, the GM gives each of you a few deliberately selected traits, called Aspects. The GM shares two Aspects per player by placing them, face up, in the middle of the table. Each of you then selects two Aspects to control for the Powered Character. Players should discuss and agree upon which Aspects each of you wants with the GM arbitrating any disputes. As you're discussing the Aspects, if there are any that you think might make your experience in the game less enjoyable, talk it over with the table and have the GM replace it.

GMs, for more on creating these Aspects, refer to "Creating Aspects for the Powered Character" on page 90 or **Appendix K - Aspects for Powered Characters** on page 173.

Once everyone has selected their Aspects, place the two you'll have in front of you, leaving them face up for everyone else to see. These Aspects provide information that helps you to play the Powered Character, such as their personality traits, patterns in their behaviors, their relationship to the group, and, of course, their powers.

Then, the GM puts a pool of 7 Power Tokens (PT) within reach of all of you. You'll need these to activate the Powered Character's special abilities. In addition, the GM places a card near this pool that has the Powered Character's six Stats and their corresponding dice. These Stats will range from d4 to d20, as all characters' Stats do. The GM will also secretly establish at least one Fear that the Powered Character has, writing it down on a notecard or piece of paper and placing it face down in the center of the table. When that Fear becomes relevant, the GM will flip that card face up.

When situations come up that relate to the Aspects in front of you, you'll be in charge of the narration. In all other situations, players will share control of the Powered Character. As with the rest of the game, you share control of this character's narrative.

When an Aspect becomes relevant, turn the card featuring that Aspect sideways. This action helps to focus the table on who will be controlling the Powered Character. Any player may activate any Aspect at the table, even one in front of another player, but the player with that Aspect in front of them should be in charge of the narration related to it. Thus, when another

player activates an Aspect in front of another player, they're handing narrative control over to that player.

While playing, you may flesh out the Powered Character as you see fit, adding desires and motivations as they go. Once a player introduces a new Aspect to the Powered Character, the rest of you should go along with it (unless there are issues with established behaviors or cards that players have or unless anyone asks to hit the brakes on that Aspect). Create a new notecard for that Aspect. Remember, though: you cannot, under any circumstances, give the Powered Character new powers. Only the GM can.

For Aspects that refer to another member of the group, the player who has that Aspect shouldn't also be playing the character most impacted by that Aspect. After all, if they did, it could lead to awkward moments at the table of the player having to take two roles in a dialogue.

When playing the Powered Character, all of you, including the GM, should have roughly equal input into their actions. As a player, you should have enough information to make decisions about what the Powered Character does. If you don't, ask the GM for more guidance—and remember that *Kids on Bikes* is a game where players have strong input over the direction of the narrative of the game. As long as you're within the bounds of what other players want out of the game, your narrative decisions are correct.

Also, remember that you, the players, are controlling the Powered Character. The characters in the game are not. This isn't about the PCs manipulating the Powered Character; it's about the players telling a story together that includes this Powered Character. That doesn't mean that the Powered Character will always agree with all of the players. In fact, it'd be boring if they did. But, generally, the relationship will not be an adversarial one.

The GM's control over the Powered Character should drive the narrative toward exciting encounters and stressful situations. If players are unsure what to do or seem stuck, the GM could certainly have the Powered Character figure something out. If the characters need to be pushed toward the revelation of a secret that only the GM knows, the Powered Character could be very useful in this respect, too. Remember, though, that your input is important in the game—and if your ideas conflict with the plan, the GM will try to adapt.

OPTIONS FOR THE POWERED CHARACTER

Alternatively, for the element of surprise, the GM could wait to give you some Aspects of the Powered Character, especially their powers, until they're relevant. For example, maybe the only information you know at first is that there's a young boy who wanders from the depths of the woods into your campground. While the characters are getting to know the Powered

Character, they might not have access to the Aspects dealing with his psychic powers. When the need to use them arises, the GM then hands out the Aspect cards.

The GM should also feel free to give out additional Aspects as the game goes on. Perhaps it is, as above, that you discover a new Aspect to add to the Powered Character's personality. But this could also be to get a player more involved with the control of that character. For example, if a player isn't participating as much with narrating the Powered Character, the GM could give that player a new Aspect card to give them more to do with them, especially if that Aspect is immediately relevant. Changes on the fly are a big part of what this game is all about, so as a player, expect to have those thrown at you.

Finally, some players may not be comfortable having partial control over an NPC, especially if those players are new to roleplaying. If you don't want to share control over the Powered Character, you can always opt out. And GMs, if you think that the players aren't ready for it or you want to keep big secrets from the players that the Powered Character knows, they don't have to get control over that character. As always, adapt the rules to make sure you're all enjoying yourselves as much as possible!

For example, Isabella and Oswald, after making sure that Kalsang is okay, explain that they need to get to the abandoned mine to search for the missing Daniel. They bike quickly over there, and, approaching the entrance to the mine, see a child lying unconscious just inside the mouth of the mine. Thinking it could be Daniel, they rush over, only to find a boy a few years younger than Daniel. They manage to wake him up. "How... how did I get here?" he asks, with an accent that none of the characters can quite place.

Gauthier, the GM, pauses the narration to say, "Okay! You've met your Powered Character! Here are the Aspects that I've selected for Raj. Let's make sure these are all ones that you think would be fun to play."

After putting out the Powered Character's PT, Stats, and a face-down Fear, Gauthier places five notecards on the table with Aspects on them: "He trusts Isabella completely," "A good quality he seems to have is that he's gentle unless provoked," "A bad quality he seems to have is impulsivity," "He seems to know nothing about his past," and "Knows an object's history by touching it".

Breanna asks if there's a sixth, so that each of them would have two, and Gauthier holds up a piece of folded paper. He explains that the second power won't be revealed until it's relevant, so whoever takes that one will be told when to unfold the paper.

Oswald says that he's interested in taking the revealed power, and Breanna says that's fine with her as long as she can have the other, secret-for-now power. Yasmin's okay with not controlling a power, but she thinks the

powerful-character-who-doesn't-remember-anything trope is kind of clichéd and asks Gauthier to break and shift some elements. The other two players and Gauthier agree, so he replaces it with “He seems to know nothing about social norms”. The group likes that one better, and Yasmin takes it.

Yasmin also says that she wants “He trusts Isabella completely”. She says she’s excited to create some tension when the Aspiring Wannabe wants to be left alone by this weird kid in public so she doesn’t seem uncool, and everyone agrees.

Oswald says he’s fine with either of the two remaining Aspects, so Breanna takes Raj’s impulsivity and Oswald takes his gentleness.



USING THE POWERED CHARACTER'S POWERS

Powers always have consequences. When someone decides that the Powered Character is going to attempt to use their power, the GM will establish a numerical difficulty that reflects how challenging the action is to complete. The difficulty should be calculated by using the following equation: **amount of experience + deviation + scope + degree of control = difficulty**. Consult the details below and on the opposite page.

Degree of Control: *How precise the Powered Character is trying to be.*

- ~ **Low:** +1 (e.g., sending a wave of force in all directions, causing an explosion, afflicting all within range with a painful memory)
- ~ **Moderate:** +2 (e.g., sending a wave of force only in one straight line, causing an explosion that moves only one direction, afflicting one person with a painful memory)
- ~ **High:** +4 (e.g., sending a small burst of force some distance away from them, combusting a can of gasoline without allowing the fire to spread)

Amount of Experience: *How often the Powered Character has done this.*

- ~ **Mastered:** +0 (They have practiced this countless times.)
- ~ **Practiced:** +2 (They have tried this quite a few times before.)
- ~ **Untried:** +4 (They have done things like this before, but never quite like this.)
- ~ **Unconceived:** +6 (They have never even thought of using their powers in this way before, or they are trying to use a power for the first time.)

Deviation: *How much this breaks the rules of the universe.*

- ~ **Accelerating the Expected:** +0 (e.g., gently eroding a rock, opening a flower's bud, nudging a coin in someone's hand)
- ~ **Causing the Expected:** +1 (e.g., putting a small crack in a rock, making a seed germinate in their palm, sliding a coin across a table)
- ~ **Causing the Unexpected:** +2 (e.g., putting a small crack in a diamond, making a plant go from seed to flower in their palm, levitating a coin off the table)
- ~ **Reversing the Expected:** +4 (e.g., sealing a crack in a rock, making a flowered plant return to seed, teleporting a coin)
- ~ **Causing the Impossible:** +6 (e.g., changing the color of a gemstone, making a plant disappear, changing one coin into another)

Scope

- ~ **Tiny:** +1 (e.g., creating a spark, nudging a glass of water off a desk, reversing time by a second)
- ~ **Small:** +2 (e.g., creating a small fire in their palm, flipping a desk, reversing time by five seconds)

- ~ **Medium:** +4 (e.g., instantly engulfing a person in flames, shoving a parked car a few inches, reversing time by ten seconds)
- ~ **Large:** +6 (e.g., instantly engulfing a room in flames, flipping a truck, reversing time by thirty seconds)
- ~ **Extra Large:** +8 (Twice the scope of Large)
- ~ **Extra Extra Large:** +10 (Three times the scope of Large)
- ~ **Note:** Each time the scope increases by the size of “Large”, add +2 to the difficulty.

Once the GM has set the difficulty and shared it with you, you should decide as a group whether to attempt it. In cases where you disagree, the decision to activate a power ultimately rests with the player controlling that power. If you choose to attempt it, you must spend one PT for every d6 that you decide to roll, adding those results together to reach the target number. They may spend more PT after any roll to roll additional dice and add them to the total. If they choose to stop spending PT before reaching or exceeding the target difficulty, any spent PT are lost and the attempt fails. If they meet or exceed that number with the sum of their rolls, though, the attempt is successful. As there are in standard stat checks, there are Lucky Breaks on the Powered Character’s roll, too. Any time you roll a 6, roll again, adding both the 6 and the new roll to the total.

The number of PT expended should factor into the narrative consequences of using the Powered Character’s ability. Because of the possibility of Lucky Breaks, you should spend PT one at a time. In addition to being the best choice for you mechanically, it also allows the GM to offer gradually worse choices for the consequences for the Powered Character’s pushing themselves. The table on the opposite page offers some suggestions for what those options could look like. Keep in mind that effects get worse the more PT spent. For example, if spending 1 PT causes a slight headache, spending 3 PT could certainly cause a migraine. If the PT aren’t spent all at once, this is a good chance to narrate the consequences as they worsen.

Each time you spend PT, the GM will give you at least two choices of what could happen as a consequence, and you’ll decide as a group which consequence occurs. Initially, these choices will be the kinds of effects that are impacting the Powered Character, like whether their powers cause a headache or trouble seeing. As those effects become more established, though, the choices will fall along the lines of choices like whether the trouble with the character’s vision comes in the form of momentary blindness or passing color blindness.

Remember, many of these consequences are real-world disabilities. When choosing consequences, make sure that you are being sensitive to this fact and respecting the boundaries set by everyone at the table. If you want to put a consequence on the Detour list, you can do so at any time. Also, these consequences should never be mocked or played for laughs.

PT Spent	Consequences (Examples)
1 PT	No effects or incredibly minor effects (a split second of a headache, a momentary glare in their vision)
2 PT	Minor physical effects (slight headache, minor tremors in the hands, passing blurred vision)
3 PT	Minor mental effects (momentary confusion, passing synesthesia, temporary loss of emotional control)
4 PT	Significant physical effects (stabbing pains, nausea, momentary blindness)
5 PT	Significant mental effects (prolonged disorientation, inability to speak coherently for a few hours, decreased emotional control until fully rested)
6 PT	Profound physical effects (broken bones, blindness until they get a night's sleep, inability to stand without support until fully rested)
7 PT	Profound mental effects (memory loss, replacement of their personality with a new one until they get a night's sleep, erratic perception of reality until they get a night's sleep)

Certainly, GMs could allow players to spend more than 7 PT, but the consequences of doing so should be increasingly dire, likely involving the effects being more than a good night's sleep can correct. In especially do-or-die situations, GMs may even let you spend PT that the Powered Character doesn't have, though the GM, not the players, will decide what the consequences are (barring, of course, any player asking the GM to brake). GMs, for more information on how to decide on these consequences, refer to "Consequences for Using the Powered Character's Powers" on page 91.

While there is a mechanical economy to the use of the Powered Character's abilities, remember that no sentient creature is a tool. No matter how useful the Powered Character's abilities are, don't simply use the Powered Character. Make sure that it makes narrative sense that they would want to help your group, and make sure that your character understands the sacrifice that using these powers represents for the Powered Character.

For example, the teens talk to the strange child outside of the mine and find out that his name is Raj. Meanwhile, Kalsang looks around for any evidence of Daniel. The GM gives her a Brains check with a difficulty of 4, which she passes, finding her son's baseball cap, something he always has with him. She runs over to it and picks it up, but she's not able to find any other evidence of him. Devastated, Kalsang starts crying. (At the table, Carlos turns the "Able to Know an Object's History by Touch" Aspect, taking narrative control of the Powered Character.) Raj touches Kalsang's shoulder gently and says, "I...I might be able to help," and holds out his hand to take the cap. Kalsang, confused, hands it to him, and Carlos announces that he's going to

have Raj try to read the cap's history to find out when it was last with Daniel. He thinks reading the last few hours of its history should do the trick.

Gauthier, the GM, looks at the rules on pages 68 and 69 and determines the total difficulty will be 9:

- ~ That this is a Low Degree of Control since he's not trying to see a specific part of the hat's history (+1)
- ~ That Raj has Practiced this skill of reading objects to see the person who possessed them (+2)
- ~ That this will Cause the Unexpected outcome of Raj suddenly knowing something about this object (+2)
- ~ And that going back by a few hours is a Medium scope (+4)

Carlos decides to go for it and spends 3 PT. He gets an 8, not quite able to make a connection with the object yet. Based on choices Gauthier presents them with, the players decide that Raj's hands tremble as he holds the hat, and his face reddens with anger. Carlos decides to spend another PT and gets a 3 on the next d6 for a total of 11. Gauthier says that Daniel seems to have lost his hat more than a few hours ago, so even though the check was a success, the characters have gained no information. Tears start rolling down Raj's face, but he grits his teeth and says, "I can go back farther... but nothing yet..."

Since Raj hasn't found anything yet, Carlos asks if he can use the +2 leftover from the roll to make the scope of the check Large and go back by a few more hours. Gauthier agrees, and Raj pushes further into the hat's past and sees Daniel putting it on in the woods just away from the mine. His bike is there, and his helmet is swinging on the handlebars, having just been placed there. Time jumps forward, and Raj sees a few seconds of Daniel walking toward the mouth of the cave. Then time jumps again. The perspective has changed. The hat is on the ground where Kalsang found it, and Raj can just make out Daniel's body being dragged by something into the cave. He drops the hat and falls backwards, clutching his stomach and crying, again based on choices the players made after Gauthier gave them options.

Isabella goes over to him to check on him. (At the table, Yasmin turns the "Completely Trusting of One Member of the Group" Aspect and takes narrative control of the Powered Character.) He explains that when he uses his powers, it feels like glass exploding in his stomach. Isabella takes his hands, seeing that they're trembling violently and tells him it will be okay. Raj looks up at her and smiles. "I believe you," he says. "Will you hold my hands while I rest? I just want to feel the sun on my face for a little bit."

REPLENISHING POWER TOKENS

In order to replenish their Power Tokens, the Powered Character needs to rest, eat, or take other appropriate action. A full night's rest should fully restore the character—unless they have exhausted all of their PT or dipped below zero. In that case, recovery should take more time, though the exact duration is up to the GM's discretion.

Also, there should be one or two things that can help the Powered Character recover without sleeping—or recover more quickly if they've dipped into negative PT. Do they crave a particular kind of food, maybe something high in iron? Does meditation or direct sunlight help them to recover? Likely, spending time with someone they have a close bond with in the group will help, too. In all situations, the Powered Character should be subtly drawn to these things to give you clues—but your GM should feel free to throw in some red herrings.

For example, hearing Yasmin say that Raj likes being in the sun gives Gauthier an idea. One of the ways that Raj will recover his powers is through exposure to direct sunlight. In the time it takes for his trembling and stomach pain to pass, Raj has regained 2 PT, giving him 5 currently in his pool. Later, the characters might think back on this moment, especially if Raj is unsuccessfully trying to recover his powers at night or in the dark of the mines. Or, they might need a few more hints before they put it together. If need be, Gauthier can always ask them to make a Brains check for a character to put it together even if the players don't.





CHAPTER 6: BIKE MAINTENANCE

Just like riders should look over their bike after a ride, players and GMs should reflect over their game after each session. Bike Maintenance is a key time to get feedback, integrate what you learned, and set up for next time. These vital steps help encourage a supportive and trusting play culture while also giving the GM tools to improve their craft.

After each session, go through your Bike Maintenance routine. Though you may add any additional checks that you decide upon as a group, use the two following steps to ensure that everyone's input is heard:

- Free Talk and Decompression
- Stars and Wishes

FREE TALK AND DECOMPRESSION

After an intense bike ride, you need a moment to catch your breath. Before your Bike Maintenance discussion, make sure that everyone has the same opportunity. Stand up, get some water, use the bathroom, stretch your legs, just breathe, talk about something that just happened—whatever you, the other players, and the GM need to do to step out of the game before reflecting over it.

Make sure you give as much time as each person needs to be ready to reflect, even if that means coming back to the later parts of Bike Maintenance on another day. People process things at different speeds, and you can't rush someone's reflection.

STARS AND WISHES

We'll expand on these in the GM's section, but in short, Stars and Wishes are a way to step out of character and plan for future sessions.

Stars are things in the game you loved. You can list scenes, moments, mechanics, anything that helped make the game awesome for you.

Wishes are things you want more of or want to see in the game for next time. These can be emotional beats, scenes, mechanics to use, moments for your character to experience, or themes you'd like to further explore. There are no wrong answers here. Share anything that you'd be excited to see in upcoming sessions.

For more, see "Stars and Wishes" on page 102.

CHAPTER 7: INFORMATION FOR THE GM

So, you've agreed to run the game for your friends. Thank you for facilitating their experience with the game! GMing can be intimidating, so the purpose of this section is to offer some advice and some tools to help you run a great game for your friends. In the end, that's what GMing is all about: telling a great story with some friends.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Before we get to the fun parts of GMing later in this section, let's talk about when things go wrong. So much of your job as GM is making sure that things go well, that the story progresses, and that everyone has a good time, participates, and has time to shine. An even bigger part of the social responsibility of being the GM is ensuring everyone feels okay during the game, especially in a horror game.

This responsibility means you need to know the difference between fun and trouble, what it looks like, and what to do when things spiral out of control. Many people will game together and never run into an issue, but because horror can touch on personal fears and sore spots, sometimes games can unintentionally spiral out of control. When that happens, use this section to know what to do.

VISUAL CUES FOR FUN AND FOR DISCOMFORT & CHECKING PRESSURE

When people are engaged in the game and having a good time, they are often animated, leaning forward, eyes wide open, and are talking, being expressive, and having their character do things in the fiction. They may make jokes, exchange thoughts with you or other players, and offer ideas for the fiction. People having fun often look like they're watching a great TV show or hearing a great story from a friend.

Of course, this can vary from person to person. For some people, being completely silent may be an indication that they're caught up in the events of the story. Talk to your players about what engagement looks like for them, perhaps as part of your Session Zero.

When someone is having a bad time, they are often withdrawn, distracted, or irritable. They may lash out, say snarky things, or take jabs at other players. They may make disparaging jokes about themselves or others. Sometimes, though, when someone is hurt or upset, they can become quiet, seem to try to make themselves smaller, and respond quietly, if at all. They may sit and stare into their lap rather than engage. Most of these folks

will answer “I don’t know” if asked to make a decision. They may also leave the table, go to the bathroom a lot, or stay in another room rather than return to the game.

As with what fun looks like, discomfort can vary, too. While cracking jokes might be a sign for some that they’re engaged, humor can also be a coping mechanism when people become uncomfortable. Or, a person becoming more engaged in the story could be an attempt to shift the narrative into a direction they’re more comfortable with. For some people, doodling, crafting, or playing on their phone may be a way to address overstimulation or discomfort. For others, allowing themselves something to focus on lets them actually listen and play better. Make sure everyone at the table knows what each other’s behaviors mean.

Be sure to use the Check Pressure mechanic (discussed on page 14) whenever you aren’t absolutely positive that everyone’s enjoying themselves. Doing so is especially key during scenes involving intimacy, any kind of violence, or suspense. It’s better to pause then forge ahead and make a player uncomfortable. As the GM, it’s your role to check pressure even if other players are leading the narration.

WRONG TURNS

Sometimes things go too far. Someone forgot to use the Road Signals, wasn’t able to, or didn’t notice people were uncomfortable. Triggers are, by their nature, unknowable and unpredictable. There are some signs your game is going wrong, such as a lot of uncomfortable silences with people glancing at each other but not saying anything, performing the discomfort actions discussed earlier, or just not looking with excitement to you for what happens next.

When someone is uncomfortable or when things have taken a wrong turn, it’s time to take a rest stop. Everyone should leave the table and then come back after a breather. Check in with anyone who looked uncomfortable. If the entire game was getting away from you, it’s time to stop and do a whole-table check-in.

If things have escalated this far, follow these steps:

1. Ask how each player is feeling;
2. Ask them to talk about the negative emotions they’re experiencing;
3. Ask how you can *coast*, *backpedal*, or *brake*;
4. Do what you just laid out;
5. Take another *rest stop* after that scene;
6. Check in again;

For step 3, remember to offer alternatives to what happened in the fiction that is upsetting people. Have everyone offer ideas or thoughts on where it can go that people will feel better about. If they say nothing needs to change, then they may have just needed to vent. If any new unplayable content comes up, add it to the Detour list.

If on step 3, someone says there's nothing to be done or can't communicate how to make it better for them, it's time to end the game for now. Remember, no one gets left behind. This is one of those times where the person most upset should take an active role in setting the tone and pace for the next session.

ENDING GAMES PERMANENTLY

Sometimes, something has happened in or outside of the game that leave players unable to see a way forward. When that happens, take a rest stop and do the steps in the *Wrong Turns* section, starting on page 76. If people seem angry or frustrated and don't see a way forward, don't force it. Thank them for being honest and stop playing for now.

Do your Debriefing (starting on page 110), and then let everyone go home. You may want to take a longer time with debrief questions than usual. Check in with your players between sessions to confirm that they want to continue playing the game, and give them the chance to share anything with you privately that they need to express. You can report those things back to the group confidentially.

If all players wish to continue, at the beginning of the next session, ask if there's anything from the last game they want to address before you jump into the session. If they do, use the steps from the *Wrong Turns* section. If they still don't know how to proceed, it's best to remove that content and start this session from where that leaves you. Never keep content that upset or hurt people in the game if they are struggling with it.

If any players wish to leave the game, let them. Their safety and happiness is more important than the game. Once you know which player or players want to leave the game, let the other players know. This may change their opinion on continuing the game.

Be sure to include yourself in these discussions and to deliberately make the decision about whether you want to continue to play or not. As the GM, your safety and comfort matters just as much as that of your players. Share your feelings about what happened with the players, and, if you have concerns about continuing, share those, too. The game is for everyone, including you.



STARTING TO CRAFT THE STORY

In *Kids on Bikes*, the setup at the start of the game is vital to helping them craft a good story later as it lets players create the town and establish the connections between each character. Let's talk about the elements to pay attention to during the setup in order to have more hooks for the adventure and to get the inspiration you need for the upcoming game. Here are some questions to ask yourself (and possibly take notes about) during the setup:

- ~ **Notable organizations:** What are these organizations hiding? Is there something sinister about one of these organizations—or is one of them holding back a great evil?
- ~ **Notable landmark:** Is there more than meets the eye to one of these landmarks? What happened in the past that made this place such a nexus of attention—and could it factor into the Powered Character's backstory? Or how is the evil entity the characters will face trying to use this landmark for their own nefarious ends?
- ~ **Rumors about the town:** Which rumor is true? Which rumor is completely false? Which rumor is only part of a much more complex story? Most importantly, which rumor gets all of the players excited? Is there one where other players almost involuntarily chime in to add to it or say, "Oooh! That's good!" If so, that's the rumor to lean into, ideally in some unexpected way.
- ~ **Strengths and Tropes:** What are the characters going to generally be good at based on their Strengths and Tropes, either as a group or individually? Based on their Strengths, what are some things that the players have decided would be exciting for them to do with their character? How can you give them opportunities to do those things? For the things that multiple members of the group will be good at, those are a good way for the group to form at the start of the game, giving them all something that they can be successful at together. Once the characters have learned to rely on one another, this can be a good opportunity for specific characters to shine, especially if they haven't had the chance to yet or if their player has been taking more of a passive role in the game.
- ~ **Fears and Flaws:** The things that their characters don't want to encounter are things that the players are telling you they want to see. What are some good ways to have characters confront their Fears? What are some situations where their Fears or Flaws might make things awkward for the characters but fun for the players? Where are some tense moments where you can give players the chance to roleplay their characters rising above their Flaws and even possibly overcoming their Fears?
- ~ **Relationship questions:** Especially with the negative questions about how characters are connected, what are some "pressure points" you

could press for the group to create tension? For questions about characters who don't know each other, what truth is there to what they've heard—and what isn't true at all?

- ~ **Bikes:** What can the characters do on their bikes that they can't do elsewhere? What are some situations you could create that would let the characters use those bonuses and let the players have fun with them?
- ~ **Knacks:** In a crisis, this is something that the characters are going to be able to do without having to roll for it, so what are some ways you can put the characters into situations where they can exercise these Knacks?

As you start to think about these possible hooks and points of tension, you'll start to see directions to take the story. That's good! You don't need to narrow it down to just one, and you can dangle a few different hints and see which direction the players take. With the shared narrative control, it's important to let the players also have a strong role in the direction that the story takes.

For example, think back to the sample responses to questions given on page 20 during the town-creation questions and then on page 21 during the creation of the map of Perkins. Gauthier, the GM for that game, jotted down the following questions about the game, listing possible points of tension and story elements as Carlos, Yasmin, and Breanna collaboratively created Perkins, Colorado:

- ~ **Mining:** Do they unearth something while mining? What caused the mining accident? Will it happen again? Will the characters need to explore that collapsed mine for some reason? When they found the bodies, were there really bite marks? Did one of the men really do that to the others? Where are the other two bodies?
- ~ **Candles:** Why does Perkins want to drive out the darkness? Are they afraid of something?
- ~ **Economy:** How has the increased economic prosperity affected the townspeople differently? Have any new businesses popped up suddenly?
- ~ **Elks Club:** Why is the club so popular? "Most of the adult men" is an interesting amount. What keeps some of the men out of the Elks? Is it really a front? Or is it actually the opposite, that they're actually a powerful but secret force for good in Perkins?
- ~ **River Bend, CO:** The nearby town isn't an immediate source for conflict, but Gauthier decides to keep this location in mind if he wants to throw the players off a bit by making them travel there or if he wants to introduce complete strangers to the PCs.
- ~ **Strip Malls:** What sets the two strip malls apart? Is there a good place for conflict here? Does one of the malls cater to one group in Perkins instead of the other? Any strange, new shops that just opened up?

Any stores that never seem to have customers but somehow have stayed in business for years? What are they actually doing there?

- ~ **Diner:** Who hangs out there? Is there anything strange about the food they serve? Is anyone there late at night when they shouldn't be? Or is there anyone who refuses to go and refuses to explain why?
- ~ **Diving cliff:** Good place for a strong moment of tension? What time of year are we going to be playing in? Any historical accidents there—or things that were claimed to be an accident?
- ~ **Worthy/Yates:** Are they actually a couple? What if they're meeting frequently to cook up some evil—or to share notes on some evil that they're keeping an eye on? Does that have anything to do with the mining accident?

In thinking over his notes, Gauthier noticed that the players focused their characters a lot on the mines: Yasmin had Kalsang work there and lose her husband in the accident, and both Breanna and Carlos seemed interested in the mines, too. By contrast, there wasn't much reaction from the other players when Carlos mentioned that the Elks might be a front, so that doesn't seem to grab the players. But, he thinks that he'll see if players start bringing it up in the game. If so, that might be something to lean into. Alternatively, if no one mentions it for a while, bringing it back could be a great surprise later in the campaign.

Other than that, he sees the relationship between the two principals as something that might be worth pursuing—but he decides that taking it in a very different direction than the players might be expecting could be cool. He only has a rough idea: there are students in the schools who need to be kept under surveillance, which could be an interesting twist. If the characters follow them, he decides that he'll let the characters see them meeting at the local diner and talking, but not in the way lovers might. That, he thinks, might be enough to interest them in sneaking in to find out more. He'll see where things go, but he figures having two hooks is a good start.

In looking at the Strengths, Flaws, Fears, Obligations, and bikes as well as the aspects of the characters' identities the players selected, Gauthier thinks about a few things:

- ~ Kalsang has Tough as a Strength and overprotective as a Flaw. Given that she's the adult in the group, having Kalsang defend the kids in a fight might be interesting. Yasmin's choice to be able to carry an extra person on her bike and to help the Powered Character regain PT suggests that she's going to want to have a bond with that character when they show up. Since Kalsang's Obligations all center around Daniel, Gauthier thinks that putting him in danger (even perceived danger) would have an impact on Kalsang. Yasmin also chose to make Kalsang skilled at repairing vehicles and took that as her Knack, too. This is definitely something to lean into. Having too many points

where Kalsang needs to rest after moving around too much could feel heavy handed, so Gauthier decides to let Yasmin roleplay that aspect of Kalsang's character when she feels it's right.

- ~ Oswald's Intuitive Strength suggests that Carlos would be excited to get inside information to help out the group. Also, having the basket on his bike means that he'll be able to have a commonplace item with him during a session. On top of that, his Knack is reading and understanding things quickly, so it seems like Carlos might want to be the problem solver of the group.
- ~ Isabella's dancing Knack is such a clear narrative focus that Gauthier knows that's something he'll have to include in the adventure at some point, not just for fun but for a pivotal moment. Maybe she'll have the chance to use her skills to impress others and get some key information. Maybe she'll be able to use it as a distraction. Also, Breanna mentioned wanting part of the narrative to explore Isabella's asexuality, so he knows that should appear in the narrative somewhere, but he hasn't decided where yet. Given her Aspiring Wannabe Trope, he also thinks it would be interesting to give her the chance to do something that might cause friction in the group to get noticed by the cool kids.

Gauthier also thinks back to the relationship questions between the characters starting on page 33. He takes notes about points of tension in the relationship—or about ways to draw the characters together:

- ~ Oswald/Kalsang: Oswald is comfortable talking to Kalsang, the mother of his best friend, and if something happened to Daniel, they'd likely work together to fix it. They share a similar love of fantasy novels. Then there's the deep secret about the near affair between Kalsang and Oswald's dad. Oswald doesn't know. Does Oswald's mom? Probably.
- ~ Oswald/Isabella: Isabella as an Aspiring Wannabe and Oswald as a Brilliant Mathlete means that she wouldn't want to be seen with him. They were old friends but aren't anymore. That said, Oswald reminds Isabella of who she was. She might be willing to help if Oswald needed her (especially if no one else would ever find out), and Oswald seems like he would definitely be willing to help her if she asked.
- ~ Kalsang/Isabella: Kalsang as a Blue-Collar Worker and Isabella as an Aspiring Wannabe who doesn't know her means there's not much here, so Oswald seems to be the connection for the two of them. Isabella's mom being the mayor might be something to lean on if Kalsang wants a political favor for some reason, but that seems unlikely given what Gauthier knows about her. Nothing's jumping out to him right now, and that's okay!



TONE AND PACE

One of the most difficult elements of GMing is maintaining a coherent game without it getting boring. There are two key elements that can be particularly difficult: tone and pace.

With respect to tone, players will discuss at the beginning of the game whether they want a serious game, a silly one, or something in the middle. However, especially in campaign-style games, having only serious, morose characters glumly struggling against the forces of evil can get old. So too can a cartoonish hodge-podge of characters absurdly gallivanting through unrealistic scenario after unrealistic scenario. Figuring out what the right balance is part of the art of GMing.

The same is true of the pace of the game. The world you're helping to create will feel disjointed if it throws the players right into direct conflict with a powered monster without any preamble every time they play. Spending seven hours establishing characters and their relationships before they get even a hint as to any central conflict, too, could get boring. Again, variety is vital.

As a result, GMing often relies heavily on your ability to read the group and adjust the tone of the game. There are, however, a few suggestions that have generally worked for us in the past:

- ~ Don't feel like you have to roleplay everything that happens in the world of the game. If the characters are driving for two hours to a neighboring town, you don't need to have the characters narrate their conversation for those two hours. If the characters are going their separate ways, you can have them give quick snapshots of what they did during that time. Don't feel like every moment has to be accounted for.
- ~ Encourage players to tell you whether they want more or less of something, both before games and even during sessions. If the group is getting bored with the way the current game is going, work to give them more of what they want.
- ~ Encourage players to actively push the narrative toward what they want. In *Kids on Bikes*, players have control over more than just their characters' reactions, so if they want some action to happen, let them make that action happen. See "How to Share Narrative Control with your Players" on page 85 for more.
- ~ If players seem to want different things, feel free to pause the game, discuss what's happening on a meta level, and then step back into the game. For example, if Carlos is really enjoying the slower-paced role-playing but Yasmin wants some action, discuss how to find a middle ground. Is there a way for both of them to get what they want—or can one of them agree to hold off on what they want in exchange for more of that later on? Trust your players' maturity.

- After particularly intense sessions (or parts of sessions), try to give the players a bit of a break. You've probably noticed in film that after big action scenes there's usually a bit of a lull—especially if a character has suffered a big loss. Not only does this give the audience a break from frenetic action, but it also gives them time to process what the loss means going forward. Especially in a game where you want your players to take ownership of the direction of the story, you need to give them time to think about what big events will mean going forward. However, you also don't want to jump from a loss in the party to screwball comedy. Again, a big part of GMing is reading the room.
- You're a player in the game, too. If you're enjoying the pace and the tone, chances are the group is, too. When in doubt, just ask the other players if they're enjoying themselves as much as you are.

HOW TO SHARE NARRATIVE CONTROL WITH YOUR PLAYERS

Depending on how many role-playing games you've enjoyed over the years, you might be used to different approaches for the GM. In traditional role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, the GM directs a lot of the action and is almost always responsible for telling players what happens in response to their actions. As a result, with these approaches, each player is only responsible for their own character's actions, not for the world around them.

As you've seen in the rules, *Kids on Bikes* takes a very different approach, and for GMs used to other styles, the shift can be disorienting. In this section, we'll talk a bit about how to best make the shift that *Kids on Bikes* asks you to make.

LEAN ON THE RULES

Many of the rules in *Kids on Bikes* mechanize this by giving control to the players. In creating the game, and especially in our revisions for the second edition, we did our best to make it easy for you to share the story with everyone at the table. So embrace the rules.

For example, when injuries could occur, players get to set limits for their characters, which in many games (including the first edition of *Kids on Bikes*) isn't the case. Let players tell you what could happen to their character instead of dictating it. By having them set the stakes, you're giving them good, meaningful control over the narration, and making sure that they'll have fun in the game no matter how the dice roll.

The same is true with asking players to decide what consequences occur for using the Powered Character's PT. When they decide whether the character will go temporarily blind or become too weak to stand for a few minutes, they're telling you what they think would create tension in the game. Trust them!

ASK INTERESTING QUESTIONS



In many roleplaying games, players really only answer one question over and over again: “What do you do in response to what I’ve just narrated?” It’s not a bad question at all, but it limits players to controlling only their character and forces the GM to be the only person to have all of the other answers.

Kids on Bikes asks you to shift away from that and ask interesting questions of your players about the world around them. To help you do that, here are some kinds of questions you’ll ask your players during the game. Most of these categories are not mutually exclusive, so mix and match to suit your needs.

- ~ **Closed Questions:** Though these kinds of questions sometimes get a bad reputation, they can be very powerful in the game. Sometimes, they’re as simple as yes-or-no questions, and sometimes they’re short answers that establish a fact. Either way, they can also help to meaningfully establish the world of the game in a concise way.
 - ~ “Does the teacher still have the apple you gave them on their desk?” “No, he doesn’t. Sigh. I thought maybe he’d accepted my peace offering...”
 - ~ “What’s the name of the town’s bike shop?” “Mike’s Bikes!”
 - ~ “What did your dad make for dinner?” “Meatloaf. Again.”
- ~ **Open Questions:** At the other end of the spectrum, open questions require some elaboration, not a short, simple answer. Consequently, these push your players to establish relationships, explain parts of the world of the game, or give a rationale. Often, they start with how or why. It’s fine for players to answer these questions about NPCs in the game, especially if their character is interacting with them.
 - ~ “Well, that roll didn’t work out for you. Why isn’t your boss convinced about where you were?” “Crap. He sees the dirt on my shoes, so he knows I haven’t just been in the warehouse all day.”
 - ~ “You got a lucky break! How does luck help you elude the snallygaster?” “Just as it’s about to catch up with us, it hears the screech of a train whistle, and thinks, just for a second, that there might be another snallygaster nearby. By the time it figures out there isn’t, we’ve already slipped into a nearby drainage pipe to hide.”
 - ~ “Why are you interested in the work your aunt does at her job?” “Ever since she explained virology to me, I’ve been fascinated by her work. I don’t know why it interests me so much, but it probably has something to do with how cool it sounds to be able to save people from a laboratory...and how the work she does could save lives for centuries to come even if people won’t know her name.”
- ~ **Leading Questions:** These kinds of questions are ones with a detail baked into them. When you want to establish a fact through a

question, you can ask one of these. By doing so, you still leave the details of that fact up to the player, though, giving them more narrative control.

- “What does the firefighter say that lets you know he knows you’re there without the other firefighters finding out?” “He tells them that he already checked this room, and if there were four kids in there, he would have seen them. There’s no way he’d know there were four of us unless he really knew.”
- “As you’re going down the river, when do you realize that your raft is taking on water?” “Oh, as soon as we get in. We don’t have any other ways to get away, though.”
- “Why do you still regret the way you talked to them?” “I told them I hated the mixtape they made me, knowing that their musical taste was the thing they were proudest of. They never made me another tape.”
- **Follow-Up Questions:** These are questions to pose when you want your players to elaborate more. Often, these are the clearest way to tell players that they have control over what happens in the world of the game, especially if they’re used to the GM telling them what happens and thus only give short answers.
 - “Okay, great, the car won’t start! As you look under the hood, you see why. What’s wrong there?” “There’s just no engine in it. Like, at all.”
 - “But what exactly does she throw at you, and how does she insult you while she does?” “She tells me that I’ve never been a good friend as she throws her half of the Best Friends lockets we have.”
 - “What does the librarian say or do that makes it clear that they want to help but just don’t understand you?” “He looks up from the computer they use to check out books and focuses completely on me. Before, he was trying to do two things at once, but now, he wants to piece this together.”

Using these questions will help both you and the players know that you’re not making all of the decisions. Plus, it might take some of the pressure off of you to know that you don’t always have to have all of the answers.



RESPOND WITH FLEXIBILITY

Having a rough idea of where the story is headed is good. It will help you tease details or drop in clues—but only if you won't feel locked into that. This is especially true for the early sessions, where you and the players are just settling into your small town. If you have it in your head that all of the action's going to take place at the mines but the characters don't leave the school, adjust, even if that means that the monster this week isn't a coal golem. You might think that the roller rink is going to be a big draw, but the characters might never visit it to find the secret passage to the underground supercomputer. There's no reason that the computer can't be under the ice cream store they always find their way back to, is there?

Flexibility is important in a game like *Kids on Bikes* because it allows players to craft the story they want to play rather than feeling forced into a world that someone else creates for them. It gives players more autonomy—and it helps you, the GM, avoid having to create everything yourself. For many players and GMs, this will be a big shift from games where the only thing that players control is their character and where the GM controls *everything* else. If this is you, a good way to move away from the “GM is God” mindset is to ask a lot of questions of everyone at the table. The worldbuilding portion of the game is, in fact, designed to do just that!

TAKE FEEDBACK

One of the scariest things to do when GMing can be asking players what could help them enjoy the game more, but it's also one of the most powerful ways to make sure that everyone's having fun.

Using Stars & Wishes, discussed on page 102, is a great way to make sure that you know what players liked best and what they'd like to see more of in the future. But it's not necessarily the only time to seek feedback. After a part of the session that you enjoyed, you can do a quick check-in with your players by asking, “Did you like that part?”—especially if you aren't sure if players did.

Along those lines, sometimes, if the characters are taking a long car ride, players might want to roleplay the conversations they have in the car. Other times, they may want to just cut to arriving at their destination. A great question to ask before something like that is, “Do you want to jump ahead to getting to the power plant, or is there anything you want to talk about before you get there?” This kind of quick feedback can help you monitor the pacing of the game to make sure everyone's having fun.

FOCUS ON FUN

Ultimately, this is what sharing narrative control is all about. A key part of your job is to make sure that everyone at the table has fun, including you. If you make your decisions with this in mind, everyone's going to have a blast

playing. And when players get to have control over what happens in the world around their characters, they're able to put things that they would find fun into the game.

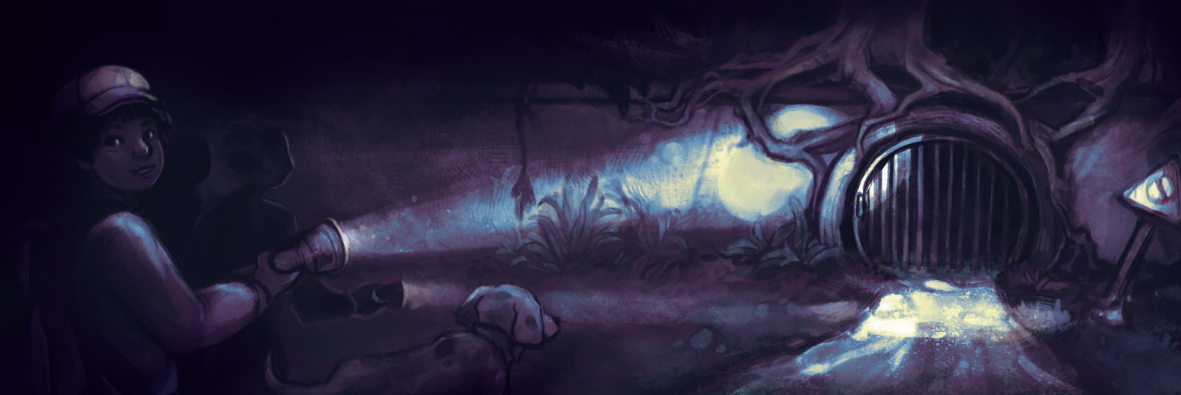
MAKING FAILING A STAT CHECK FUN

One of the key differences between *Kids on Bikes* and role-playing games that focus on combat is that, as in life or in the stories we've enjoyed reading and watching, failure isn't necessarily all bad. While it certainly means that the thing the character was trying to do doesn't happen, it doesn't mean that players have failed.

Think back to the source material that you've enjoyed and that you're probably drawing inspiration from to run the game. In those stories, the characters don't always succeed at what they're trying to do right off the bat. If they did, it wouldn't be a very interesting story. So when players aren't successful, remember that this is an opportunity for creativity on their part (and, if necessary, on your part) to approach the problem from another angle. It's also a chance for the story to take an unexpected twist.

For example, Kalsang, Oswald, Isabella, and Raj decide that they'll head into the cave to see if they can find Daniel. There are easy-to-spot footprints heading into the cave, and Oswald runs back to his bike to take a flashlight out of the basket: his one commonplace item this session. They make their way in, Oswald trying to follow the trail. Kalsang, whose Fear is suffocating, especially under the earth, is doing her best to keep it together, but she wouldn't be great at tracking right now. Isabella offers to help, but Yasmin activates Raj's aspect that he trusts Isabella completely and narrates how he's clinging to her as they get deeper into the cave.

Eventually, Gauthier decides that to follow this trail is going to require a check. The cave is dark, the flashlight only does so much, and everyone is understandably scared about the situation. He tells Oswald to make a check to continue to follow the trail. Oswald picks Brains to do so, and the GM tells him it will be a difficulty of 12 and that it has to be a Snap Decision. Oswald decides to go through with it, rolling a 3. Oswald decides not to try to mitigate the failure with Adversity Tokens and asks if he can be clumsy to gain 2 AT instead of 1 for the failure. The GM agrees, so Oswald narrates how he stumbles over a rock and falls, damaging the flashlight. Now, it's flickering, making it even harder to follow the trail. This is bad for the characters, but it's great for the story.



CREATING ASPECTS FOR THE POWERED CHARACTER

Though players will share narrative control when it comes to the Powered Character, initially, creating the Aspects falls on you. When creating those Aspects, you're free to give players anything that you think might be fun. However, that much freedom can be daunting for GMs, so Appendix K features both sentence starters to create these Aspects and rollable examples to complete those sentence starters.

When creating the Aspects, try to give players ones that they can have fun roleplaying—but also ones that will connect to how you initially imagine the Powered Character to be. The way that players craft the narrative around them might change the meaning of these Aspects, but the Powered Character's fears and motivations will feel more coherent if you have a possible backstory in mind when you craft them. So if they're unwilling to touch water, make sure that you have a reason for that in mind, but leave room in the narration for players to shift that depending on their contributions.

Also, don't be afraid to have Aspects in tension with each other. Having a Powered Character who seems to know nothing about their past but desperately wants to find their family could create some interesting moments, and it certainly makes their goal more complicated. On the other hand, avoid direct contradictions like having them have the virtue of patience and the vice of impatience. If you're rolling and get something you think is contradictory or too hard to play with another Aspect, just reroll.

For example, in creating Raj, Gauthier envisioned him as having been trapped in the mines for a few years, brought to the town by the secretive private corporation that was pretending to investigate the mine's collapse... but really establishing a network of tunnels where they could conduct their experiments undetected. Once those tunnels were created, Raj and five other children were brought in as experimental subjects. Because Raj was never shown much kindness during his time in the mine, he bonds inappropriately quickly to the first person who shows any compassion towards him. That also explains, Gauthier thought, why he's gentle: he was no match for his captors, so he became passive. It also explains his impulsivity: he has never had choices before, so now that he's out in the world, he wants to try and do everything. And, in order to keep him from

wanting to escape, the corporation erased most of his memories from before he was taken. Without any memory of his family, he can't want to see them again. Gauthier wasn't locked in to any of these elements of his backstory (he was even willing to swap one of these Aspects out for another), but he at least had a possible coherent explanation for them when he introduced them, giving Raj's character a sense of coherence.

CONSEQUENCES FOR USING THE POWERED CHARACTER'S POWERS

If the game's mechanics let them, some players would try to solve every issue they have with the Powered Character's abilities. That's why we placed limits on the amount of times they can use it by putting in PT and why spending those tokens causes adverse effects. To paraphrase the old saying, when you have a really good hammer, everything starts to look like a nail. And that doesn't make for complicated problem solving or interesting roleplaying.

When creating consequences for the effects on the Powered Character, remember that your players are going to have choice in what happens. Collaborative play is vital in *Kids on Bikes*, and giving players the choice between two bad options is often more impactful than just deciding which they'll suffer from.

If you're feeling stuck for what consequences to give them and want to roll a die, the tables below have 10 Mental effects and 10 Physical effects. Roll 2d10 for two options on either of the tables, rerolling if you get the same result, and allow your players to pick between the two. Feel free to come up with your own Mental or Physical effects, as long as they aren't on your Detour List.

Roll	Mental Effect
1	Aggression
2	Confusion
3	Fear
4	Hallucinations
5	Inability to speak
6	Memory loss
7	Restlessness
8	Sadness
9	Sensory overload
10	Synesthesia

Roll	Physical Effect
1	Bleeding
2	Decreased hearing
3	Decreased vision
4	Dizziness
5	Fatigue
6	Numbness
7	Physical pain
8	Shortness of breath
9	Twitching
10	Weakness

As players are using the Powered Character's abilities, make sure that you strike a balance between predictability and surprise. In most cases, you'll want to be predictable in the choices you give them. Each time the Powered Character has a minor physical effect, it will probably be largely the same. If, for example, they spend only 1 PT to do something minor and they've previously established that the Powered Character's vision is impacted, the same choice between ten seconds of blindness or a minute of colorblindness makes sense. When players really start to push the Powered Character by regularly using many PT or try to solve every problem with their really great hammer, though, that's when to throw something new at them.

Because players will be choosing what the consequences are from choices that you give them, you can give them a real moment of surprise by giving them two options that they haven't encountered before. If the Powered Character has always gotten a headache, suddenly switching that to muscle weakness would be a good way to make them wonder what's different this time—as long as there *is* something different this time. If players think they've figured out how to maximize the Powered Character's abilities, especially if they've found something to help them restore their power quickly, different consequences could happen if the Powered Character has used more PT than they're used to in a short amount of time. The table on page 70 outlining consequences based on PT spent is a guideline, not a gospel.

Also, consider the narrative consequences of overusing the Powered Character's abilities. No person (or animal or alien or sentient robot) wants their friends to see them as a tool. And certainly, no one wants their friends to be reckless and expect them to bail them out at all times. If things are going that way, have the Powered Character push back a bit: a groan when asked to do the work again or a comment about always having to bail them out. If the characters ignore their new friend's complaints, as the GM, you can always change some of their Aspects, making them more hostile toward the group or, perhaps, even unwilling to help the group out if they feel really taken for granted.

Above all, use both mechanical and narrative consequences to remind the players that the Powered Character is a character, not a resource. Whether human, animal, alien, or android, the Powered Character is a sentient being with feelings, wants, and needs. They aren't a really good hammer. To underscore the impact of the use of these powers, ask the players pointed questions about how their characters respond to seeing these consequences. If the players are treating the Powered Character as an inhuman tool, you might even decide to have the Powered Character sideline themselves for a session or two.

EXERTION PAST BOUNDS OF POWER TOKENS

At especially critical moments, the Powered Character might want to go beyond their known abilities, exerting themselves past the bounds of their Power Tokens. Doing so can be suggested either by your players or by you, as your players might not think of it in an especially tense moment in the story. When someone suggests going beyond the Powered Character's PT limit, the GM must first consider whether the Powered Character is willing to overexert and risk harm for their friends. If it's a true crisis and the characters have been kind to them, they're more likely to risk it. But if the Powered Character has been used as a tool and not respected as a sentient being, they're unlikely to take that chance.

If the Powered Character is willing to take those risks, ask everyone at the table individually, “Are you willing to give me control of significant narrative and mechanical consequences?” If any player (including you, the GM) does not agree, the group will move in a different direction.

When everyone at the table agrees, three things will happen, two that will affect the game immediately and one that will affect the game long term. First, the GM will take full control of the consequences of what happens to the character, removing all choice from the players. (The only restrictions to their choices are, of course, the Detour List and the safety tools. Anyone at the table may ask the GM to *backpedal* if the outcome is harmful to them.) Second, regardless of how many PT the group spends, the consequences will be beyond those established in the chart on page 70 for 7 PT.

In addition, in the long term, if a character is the reason for the Powered Character's over-exertion—either because they needed to be saved or because they convinced the Powered Character to push their powers—some Aspects may change. Good friends are willing to take reasonable risks to help each other, but if you think players aren't doing for the Powered Character what the Powered Character is doing for them, shift the relationships between them to more negative ones. This can take the form either of eliminating a positive Aspect or adding a negative one.

As the flashlight sputters, the group decides that they can use Raj's powers to "read" the recent history of the cave and see which way Daniel was taken. He suffers the same consequences each time, the stomach pain. After the second time, the GM indicates that Raj asks if they can try something else because his stomach is really bothering him. Isabella reassures him, telling him that they don't want him to hurt—but that they really have to find Daniel. She helps Raj walk in the direction he saw Daniel being carried until they come to another fork in the cave's path.

"I don't think I can do it anymore," says Raj, but up in the distance, down one of the paths, the characters hear something. The hum of machines?

A voice? They can't quite tell. And they can't tell which direction it's coming from. Gauthier tells them that the difficulty will be 13.

The players notice that they have only 1 PT left, and Breanna suggests that they have Raj exert himself beyond his PT supply. Gauthier asks everyone at the table if they're willing to give him full control of significant consequences in exchange for an exertion of 3 PT past what he has—a total of four. Everyone agrees enthusiastically. They shift back into roleplaying.

Isabella tells Raj that this will be the last time they need him to do this, that they must be getting close, that he should trust her. Raj nods and activates his powers one more time, rolling an 11. He strains, and he murmurs, "I can't..." as he falls to get ground in a cloud of coal dust. He clutches his stomach, looks at Isabella, first in fear, then in anger, spasms, and passes out. Kalsang rushes to him and he's breathing but not responsive.

Out of game, Gauthier reaches across the table and takes the Aspect card "Completely trusting of a member of the group" from in front of Yasmin, replacing it with "Openly, but not physically, hostile toward a member of the group".

Back in the game, Isabella says quietly, "I'll stay with him. This... I asked him to do that." Kalsang insists that they stay together and helps Isabella lift him. Realizing they have to pull some of their weight here, Oswald decides to spend 1 AT to ask the GM a question with his Intuitive Strength: "Which path seems to be the one the sound is coming from?"

CHECKPOINTS FOR POWERED CHARACTERS

Just as players' individually controlled characters will have goals and motivations, the Powered Character will, too. Narratively, the Powered Character's feelings about the other members of the group will develop over the course of multiple sessions based on players' choices. Beyond the narrative changes, though, there are ways for the Powered Character to increase their abilities, improving mechanically. These can help you provide a framework for the story, too.

In terms of major changes to the Powered Character, you should consider, when thinking about the Powered Character, what the "Checkpoints" will be for them. These Checkpoints should be moments and locations that are both narratively and mechanically significant, places where something triggers a meaningful change in the character. When determining these Checkpoints, think about how a big event would influence the character.

You should use these Checkpoints as some of the "big" moments of the game, moments when things change—but not necessarily always for the better. Such Checkpoints should be used to complicate the players' lives. Perhaps they meet a key villain who is now aware of them, too.

What's important is that players, even though they'll be pushed toward these Character Checkpoints, feel a sense of dread as they approach these pivotal moments. The clues that lead players to these moments will give their experience a structure, so that they aren't just fumbling around in the world they helped to create—but they'll also create the edge-of-your-seat, anything-could-happen moments that make games memorable.

After these moments resolve, you'll let the players know if the Powered Character's abilities have changed or improved. Some options for improvement could include:

- ~ The Powered Character has more PT when they're fully rested.
- ~ The Powered Character gets to roll a die or some dice for "free" on checks, neither having to spend PT to activate those "free" dice nor suffering consequences for using them.
- ~ The Powered Character discovers a new ability, no longer has an old one, or both.
- ~ The Powered Character discovers a way to regain PT more quickly or more effectively.

It's far too early for Raj to reach a Checkpoint, but Gauthier decides on an important part of Raj's history. He was being held underground for a long time and managed to escape when something he calls The Soot Man left the mines a few days ago and stayed gone for longer than usual. Before then, The Soot Man was keeping close watch on him, feeding him scraps of food that he isn't sure how he got.

This gives the players a clue that, in Raj's character arc, he'll have to confront The Soot Man and find out why he was being held captive. When he does, he might discover what one of his powers is. Maybe that's when Breanna gets to unfold the secret Aspect she's holding. Or, confronting something from his past might give Raj greater control over his powers and allow him to roll a d6 to activate his powers at no cost of PT. Gauthier hasn't decided yet, but he has time to figure it out.

CREATING & FIGHTING MONSTERS

In a game like *Kids on Bikes*, your players are probably going to expect to face something that's both supernatural and wants to kill them. While most of the threats they'll face will come in the form of mundane NPCs, sometimes, at some point, you'll probably want your characters to square off against something stranger. In this section, we'll talk a bit about how to create these monsters for yourselves, since each monster should be designed around the group that you're playing with and the story that you're creating together.

When creating a monster to include in your game, there are a few questions you should consider, all of which we'll elaborate on more fully in this section:

- Why include a monster instead of a mundane threat?
- What do you expect will be the nature of the monster's threat to the group?
- What do you expect will be the group's goal with regard to the monster?
- What will the monster's stats be?
- How do you expect the characters to succeed against the monster?
- How do you expect the players to figure out the monster's weaknesses?

You'll notice that "expect" appears a lot in that list. Remember, whatever plan you have for how things will go with the monster, your players may take things in an unexpected direction. While having answers to these questions will help guide your part of the storytelling, being too rigid about keeping the answers the same will limit your players' storytelling.

WHY INCLUDE A MONSTER INSTEAD OF A MUNDANE THREAT?

First, stop and ask yourself if you really want to bring a monster into the game yet. Including a supernatural creature too early on can shift the focus of the game. When stories escalate to these monstrous threats, it's hard to come back from that. If players, for example, save the town from total destruction by a hydra-like creature the size of a school bus, it's hard to go back to a story about finding out where a mysterious radio signal is coming from. The stakes would feel like they're stepping back instead of stepping up. So the kinds of threats that you include should gradually escalate.



Also, you have to decide if this is the right time for the characters to see the monster even if you're ready to introduce the idea of the monster. Locking yourself into what the monster really is can constrain how you and your players tell the story. Also, meeting their first monster should feel really climactic for an arc in your characters' story. Having an opening scene where a monster appears sets up expectations for a game being a specific way—and if that's the game you want to play, great! Go for it! Make sure you know what expectations you're setting up when you do. Showing a monster early might be better for a shorter story.

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT WILL BE THE NATURE OF THE MONSTER'S THREAT TO THE GROUP?

Beyond direct, physical confrontation, there are a few ways that a monster could interact with the group. The way that you want the monster to threaten the group will help you determine other details about them.

The monster could be searching for something that the characters are also searching for but be uninterested in confronting the characters physically. The monster could be directly hunting the characters—but only willing to attack if one of them is alone. The monster could simply be lost, confused, and misunderstood—but incredibly powerful and dangerous until the characters figure out how to help. Beyond the clear narrative implications, the nature of the monster's threat will help determine many of the monster's other details.

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT WILL BE THE GROUP'S GOAL WITH REGARD TO THE MONSTER?

While this may depend on the choices that your group makes, some intentional thought behind how you expect the characters to try to deal with the monster will help you better design it. Is the monster going to be one that they deal with from afar for now, coping only with the aftermath of its behavior? Will they have moments of interaction with the monster before it disappears again? Do they hope to permanently foil the monster's plans—and if so, will they do that by preventing it from getting what it wants or by destroying the monster entirely?

WHAT WILL THE MONSTER'S STATS BE?

Keeping in mind the answers to the above questions, think about what the monster's stats should be. In short, the more directly they'll be dealing with the monster and the more overtly hostile the monster will be, the closer the monster's stats need to be to the characters' stats—assuming that you want the characters to survive.

As you're determining stats for a monster, think about two ways to upend player expectations: irregular stat dice and powers. While every player's

character is going to have each of the six Stat Dice assigned to a single stat, your monsters could have d4 in 4 stats and d20 in two of them. An especially formidable monster could have nothing below a d10. And there's nothing stopping you from having a monster with 3d20 for Flight. Imagine the look on your players' faces if you tell them you need to borrow a few d20s to roll a check.

When it comes to powers, monsters do not necessarily need to suffer the same consequences that the Powered Character does for using them, and they don't need to have a publicly disclosed pool of PT—though monsters shouldn't have an infinite pool of them, either. Alternatively, characters might not be able to notice what the consequences for using their powers are until they become very clear, like the monster passing out.

HOW DO YOU EXPECT THE CHARACTERS TO SUCCEED AGAINST THE MONSTER?

In keeping with the spirit of *Kids on Bikes*, the solution for how the characters can best the monster probably isn't running up to it and punching it in the face. Direct combat, while a possible solution, is always going to be very, very dangerous for characters, especially if they're up against something much tougher than they are. Below are some other possible ways for characters to beat a monster.

- ~ **Gathering Resources:** One possibility is for the characters to need to get a set of items that will stop the monster. For example, having garlic, a stake, and a silver cross on hand could help a lot if the monsters are vampires.
- ~ **Giving the Monster What It Wants:** Characters might need to help the monster meet its needs before it causes more damage. Typically, this will take the form of giving it something (similar to gathering resources) or getting the monster to an important location. For example, if the monster is a stranded alien, finding its crashed ship and returning the alien to it might get it out of their lives.
- ~ **Numerous Successes:** In some cases, a direct conflict with the monster might involve a set number of checks. These checks could be about damaging the monster, holding it off until a stronger force shows up, or getting the monster to wear itself. For example, the characters might defeat a monster by trapping it, sealing the trap, and making sure that sealed trap is somewhere safe. Or, it could involve enduring the monster's attacks until it runs out of Power Tokens and retreats.
- ~ **Solving a Puzzle:** Sometimes, a force is giving the monster its powers and the solution is to figure out how to disrupt that power source. For example, if an extradimensional portal has been mechanically opened, solving a puzzle to deactivate that mechanism could be enough to stop the monster.

- **Weaken the Monster:** Using one or more of the methods above, the characters might weaken the monster's powers until it flees or until it's weak enough to be fought directly. In this case, make sure that you know how its stats will change as it weakens. At that point, the monster might try to flee or make a deal. Or, after doing these two things, direct combat may suddenly be a more possible solution. For example, a monster may be using technology to teleport and to enhance its strength. When the players destroy the teleporter, its Flight may drop from 2d20 to d6. When the players deactivate the rays giving it super strength, its Brawn could drop from 2d12 to d4.

You could, of course, do a combination of these solutions for the monster, especially if this is a climactic battle.



HOW DO YOU EXPECT THE PLAYERS TO FIGURE OUT THE MONSTER'S WEAKNESSES?

In order for the characters to be able to stop the monster, it will have to have some weak points. So, as you're designing a monster for your players' characters to face, the final question to consider is how you can drop hints at what those weak points are, both before and during the final confrontation. An exhaustive list of ways for characters to find hints wouldn't be possible, but here are a handful of ideas:

- ~ **Face a Smaller Monster:** The big threat should have impressive stats, but there's no reason that the characters couldn't encounter weaker versions of that monster first. They could have mostly low stats with one truly impressive one, making it easier for characters to figure out how to exploit those weak stats—or try out a different approach to stopping it. For example, a recently hatched monster might have a d4 for all stats except for Flight, where it has a d20. Finding out how to stop a creature that's weak but fast might give the characters hints about how to stop that monster's parents.
- ~ **Get Lucky Once:** The first time that the characters encounter the monster, something could happen that suggests one of its weaknesses, fending it off temporarily and giving the characters the chance to figure out how to exploit that weakness. For example, if the characters are sitting around a campfire roasting marshmallows, the monster may approach but not be willing to come too close. Is it the fire? The glowing sticks? The smell of the marshmallows?
- ~ **Read Someone Else's Successes or Failures:** If someone faced this monster before and left notes, the characters could get some information from that, even if they're just rumors or hearsay. Red herrings might abound, but a few useful pieces of information could appear multiple times. Alternatively, there could be notes about something that a previous person tried that backfired, which would suggest that the opposite might work. For example, the characters could find a book in the library with a creature oddly similar to the one they saw. If the author details how they threw acid onto the monster and it grew stronger, what happens if the characters try throwing a base on it?
- ~ **Observe the Monster:** Watching the monster itself or examining the places that the monster has been could offer some clues and could be an adventure unto itself. For example, if the monster always comes out of the water, what happens if the characters find a way to keep it from large bodies of water for a long time? If they only see it at night, what happens if they shine a bright light on it?
- ~ **Talk to the Monster:** If the monster isn't necessarily hostile toward the characters, what would happen if they just listened to it and tried to communicate with it? If it's used to people being scared of it, it might not start out by talking, but that doesn't mean the characters

couldn't coax it into communicating, especially with a good Charm roll. For example, if a monster is on a rampage in a junkyard, getting through to it and finding out why it came there in the first place may offer clues as to what the characters can help it find. Even if the monster doesn't know or can't clearly express itself, its attempts at communication may offer some clues.

And, of course, a combination of the above could be the best way to drop hints.

Above all, make sure that you're flexible about your monsters as you're playing the game. Even if you've designed a monster to be one that the characters will come into direct, physical conflict with, adjust your plans if they come up with a different solution or if they don't seem as interested in fighting. There's nothing wrong with saying to the table, "Hey, take five. I really thought you were going to fight this thing. Let me tweak a few things while you take a bio break." And if they come up with a solution that wasn't one that you'd envisioned, go with it. You can always create another challenge for them if they solve this one too quickly.

CHANGING THE RULES

Since we finalized the first rule system, we've published almost 50 Adventure Prompts, most of which have bent, broken, changed, and even introduced rules. We love that, and we'd be thrilled if you adapted the rules to make something better for your players. The purpose of playing *Kids on Bikes* is to make sure that everyone has fun, so with that in mind, if there's something that would make it more fun for your group, we encourage you to add, alter, or discard rules to make it the best experience it can be for you and your players. The only exception is the safety rules. While you can substitute comparable safety tools that work for your table, the only unchangeable rule is that you make sure the game is safe for everyone at the table.

When you're changing rules, remember that small changes can have big consequences. While it's not possible to imagine all of the potential ripple effects, try to imagine them. And if you do change something and a clever player figures out an unexpected exploit or if it otherwise ends up making the game less fun, feel free to ask them not to do that again, to change the rule back to how it was originally, or to tweak it again. To that end, if you are going to change the rules to the game, make sure that you discuss this with players. Have a *rest stop* and have everyone step out of character. Explain why you're changing the rules, get buy-in from everyone at the table, and make sure they understand that you may need to change the rules back. As with everything else in a collaborative roleplaying game like this one, assent from everyone at the table is key.

But, bottom line, as long as everyone is having fun and staying safe, you're playing *Kids on Bikes* correctly.

PLAYING MULTIPLE SESSIONS OF *KIDS ON BIKES*

We hope that you and your players will enjoy *Kids on Bikes* enough to play it over multiple sessions, developing and growing your story and the characters. Here are some tools to help you make a campaign of *Kids on Bikes* as much fun as possible.

STARS AND WISHES



After each session of the game, debrief with your players using a technique called Stars and Wishes, created by Lu Quade for *The Gauntlet*. In short, you'll be asking your players what the best moment of the session was for them (their star) and what they hope for in the future (their wish).

When asking for their star, you're asking for an especially resonant moment for them, a moment at the table that they loved. It doesn't have to be something that their character would have loved, though. By hearing what they enjoyed, you can find out what they'll want more of.

If players are having trouble coming up with a star, you could suggest one of the following sentence starters:

- The moment from this session that I enjoyed most was...
- The funniest/most emotional/most suspenseful moment of the game was...
- I thought it was great when...
- The choice that was the most interesting for me was...
- The best quote of the game is...

After getting stars, which look back over the session that just ended, move on to wishes, which look forward to future sessions. By hearing about their wish, you'll find out what they'd like to see in a subsequent game, an NPC they'd like to interact with, a feeling they'd like to get from a future session, or a development to their character. Just as the stars can help you know what to do more of, wishes tell you what you haven't included yet that they'd like to see.

If players need a prompt for a wish, you could suggest one of the following sentence starters:

- Something that I'd like to see more of in this game is...
- A location we haven't explored yet that I think would be cool would be...

- ~ The rumor that we haven't explored yet that I'm still thinking about is...
- ~ An NPC I'd love to interact with more is...
- ~ A situation I'd love for my character to have to be in...

CHANGES BETWEEN SESSIONS

If you are playing over multiple sessions, you might decide to end the session's events on a cliffhanger so that the characters can pick up right where they left—or literally fell—off. That's great, and will keep your players anxious about the resolution from one session to the next. If that's how a session ends, ignore the rest of this section for now.

If instead at the end of gameplay you've reached a point where there will be some in-game time between the end of this session and the start of the next, you and the players should work as a group to create a "coda" for the story. In classical music, a coda is the final portion of the work, one that brings the work to a close. Here, you'll do the same by telling everyone else how the events in the game thus far affect you in the weeks following. Work through the following questions, which we'll expand on below, asking each of the players to discuss them from their characters' perspectives:

- ~ What is different for you?
- ~ Any changes to your bike?
- ~ What changes in your town?
- ~ What changes for the Powered Character?

WHAT IS DIFFERENT FOR YOU?

Reflecting over what happened in the previous game, especially if in-game time will elapse between one game and the next, get your players to think about how their characters might have changed. A character who nearly drowns might develop a Fear of water—just as a character who manages to overcome their Fear of water in a critical moment might find that they aren't as afraid of it anymore. Help your players reflect over the ways in which the characters grew or regressed as a result of the events of the last game or events that may have happened in between. With each session, your players should learn more about their characters. They should never be static. These changes will likely come in the form of new Strengths, new Fears or Flaws, or changed answers to the Trope-specific questions.

Other than Knacks and Bonded Actions (addressed in the next question), losses should be counterbalanced by gains and vice versa. For example, a character who conquered their Fear of dogs at a critical moment might become boastful, which could cause tension with friends who previously appreciated their humility. Or, if a character is motivated to do well in school is now on summer break, perhaps it's time to come up with another

motivation. The players and the GM should decide collaboratively what gains and losses occur at the end of one game or before the next one. Again, though, except in the strangest cases, there should always be a balance of what is lost and what is gained.

For example, Kalsang, Isabella, and Oswald's story continues, and they find Daniel and fend off The Soot Man, who tries to abduct a few more children. They free everyone safely, and Raj bonds with Kalsang, who puts herself at risk to save him. Their first arc of the campaign ends with Kalsang agreeing to let Raj stay at her house while they try to help him remember who his family is and where he came from.

In terms of changes to the characters, one of the cool kids at the school, Daphne, is taken by The Soot Man, and she sees that Isabella and Oswald are friendly with each other. If she tells the other cool kids about this, it could thwart Isabella's efforts to be one of them, but Isabella convinces Daphne not to tell anyone. Daphne agrees—though she makes it clear that she's going to hold this over Isabella's head. Narratively, this will be a source of tension for Isabella in the game.

For Kalsang, a big change is having a second child to take care of at her house. She can find the means to do it, but she's going to be stretched even thinner between work and home. Even more than that, she has become extra protective of Daniel, having almost lost him in the same mines she lost her husband in. On the positive side, though, she feels a lot closer to Oswald, Isabella, and Raj. Yasmin and Gauthier agree that Kalsang should gain the Protective Strength and have a second Fear: losing Daniel.

Oswald doesn't change much narratively or mechanically, though as one of his wishes, Carlos says that he'd like to see more opportunities for his character to be heroic in front of kids who think he's uncool.

HAVE YOUR KNACKS AND BONDED ACTIONS CHANGED?

At the end of every arc of your story, each character should have the chance to gain a single Knack or Bonded Action, up to a maximum of 4 combined, based on what they practiced during the previous arc and how their relationships changed in the previous arc and the time in between arcs.

If characters feel that they have grown together, they may gain a Bonded Action that makes sense for both of them instead of gaining a Knack. Because it takes time, energy, and attention to foster a deep bond with someone new, they would not have those same resources between arcs to develop a personal skill such as a Knack.

At the GM's discretion, characters might develop Bonded Actions with the Powered Character.

In the first session of the new arc, characters gaining a Knack or a Bonded Action should briefly narrate a few key scenes that occurred between arcs that show them cultivating this skill. In the case of Bonded Actions, the other characters should then indicate how they feel about the strengthening bond between those two characters.

Characters may never have more than 4 Bonded Actions or Knacks combined, as the time, energy, and attention required to maintain them would be too much. Also, they cannot have more than 1 Bonded Action with the same character.

For example, while Kalsang and Oswald were already close, Isabella agrees that she grows closer to both of them. However, she's still spending so much time and attention trying to be cool and hanging out with the cool kids, especially now that she saved Daphne's life. As such, it doesn't make sense for her to gain a Bonded Action.

In terms of Knacks, though, this is a place where she feels she has grown in terms of presenting one face to the cool kids and another face to Oswald and Kalsang. It isn't, Breanna says, that she's being two-faced; it's more that she's excellent at code-switching. So, Breanna says that she plans to add the Knack of code-switching. Gauthier asks her to clarify what this will mean in practice, and she explains that she's adept at talking to and understanding different groups in different ways.

Yasmin thinks that Kalsang's Knacks haven't changed. Carlos says that he'd like for Oswald to have opportunities to find a new Knack after the next arc but that nothing seems appropriate after this one.



ANY CHANGES TO YOUR BIKE?

During an ongoing *Kids on Bikes* campaign, the characters can gain and lose bike upgrades (at the GM's discretion). After especially long or meaningful arcs or for exceptional role-playing moments, bike upgrades can be awarded. On the other hand, particularly reckless use of a bike might result in damage and the loss of an upgrade. However, all bikes should always have a bonus from its color or from at least one Upgrade.

Part way through the arc, Isabella runs into Peter again and tries, unsuccessfully this time, to spar with him on her bike. In doing so, she and her bike hit the pavement. At the end of the session, the GM shares that her tassels have been damaged, meaning that she no longer gets +1 to checks while being chased.

Gauthier suggests that since Oswald acted heroically in rescuing other kids and was willing to help, Kalsang gets him a bell for his bike. Now, he'll get +1 when helping others. Everyone, including Yasmin, agrees that this makes sense.

WHAT CHANGES IN YOUR TOWN?

As a result of what happens during the arc, there will likely be changes to the town's NPCs and the town itself that seem natural. Talk with the players about what those changes are, and be sure to tell reluctant players to *pedal harder* when they need to think more about what the consequences of the arc might be for the town and its citizens. This discussion is important to make the events of the game feel realistic and to show the players what the consequences of their actions are.

After you've discussed the consequences of the previous arc, each player should explain one thing that changes, either big or small, in the town between the arc that just ended and the one that will be starting next. Perhaps it's a new rumor that's floating around. Perhaps in the time between the last adventure and the new one, things have changed about the town, like the mill that was struggling finally closing, or the school mysteriously burning down. These new events can help to drive the narrative of the new game—and give the players some control over where the story goes. And for you, the GM, it can give you some ideas for what to do in your next arc. If you already have an idea, too, you can drop a few hints here, too.

In the first arc, while the characters are rescuing the kidnapped kids from The Soot Man, they find an adult skeleton down there, one of the miners who was lost in the accident, which they're able to tell by the nametag on his uniform. The bones have been gnawed on by what seem like human teeth, though they can't be sure.

At the start of their next game, Breanna says that some of the livestock around town have started to go missing, victims of strange, midnight

attacks. Yasmin says that a rumor going around the town is that it isn't the mining company who locked the mine down after the recent events but government agents. And indeed, the FBI has come to town to investigate the kidnappings, but there's no concrete evidence that they're the ones patrolling the entrance to the mine 24 hours a day. Carlos says that a new restaurant has opened up, and the food isn't very good, but all of the Elks seem to always be there. There's a rumor among the kids that they're plotting something sinister. Again, the rumors may be true or they may not be. But the changes to the town (in this case, the arrival of government agents and the opening of a new restaurant) should be taken as fact.

WHAT CHANGES FOR THE POWERED CHARACTER?

Just as a player's character or an NPC might change and grow over the course of a story, the Powered Character may change as well. At the end of each session and especially at the end of an arc, think about what's different going forward for the Powered Character. This is especially true if the Powered Character has reached any Checkpoints, as those will have mechanical effects going forward. See "Checkpoints for Powered Characters" on page 94 for more details about what those Checkpoints should look like and what the results of reaching them could be.

In the first arc, Raj confronts The Soot Man and manages to use his powers to drive him back, so he hits a Checkpoint. He does not, yet, discover why he was kidnapped in the first place. During the confrontation with The Soot Man, Gauthier had Breanna reveal the secret Aspect that she had, giving Raj the ability to control fire telepathically.

Non-mechanically, Raj is feeling closer to Kalsang, who behaved bravely and rescued him—but he's feeling alienated from Isabella, who lied to him to push him to use his powers more. He's still about the same with Oswald. In terms of motivations, The Soot Man didn't give him the answers he was looking for, so he's keen on discovering why he was taken in the first place.

REMOVING CHARACTERS FROM YOUR GAME

For any number of reasons, a character may need to be retired from play. It could be that their player is leaving the game or is tired of playing that character. The table as a group might decide that the character should be removed for narrative reasons, like making a story safer or more interesting. No matter the reason, if a player makes the decision to stop playing a character, the choice should be respected.

As part of the discussion prior to that character leaving the game, you and the players should discuss the extent to which the former PC will still be in the world of your game. In this stage, this is a mechanical question: "Who

will control this character going forward?" Some of the options are listed below, but this list is not meant to be exhaustive:

- **Control by the GM:** Though the player won't be playing them anymore, the character could become a more traditional NPC who appears frequently or infrequently as you and your players decide.
- **Control by the original player:** If the leaving PC's player is staying in the game, they might still narrate what the character does and says when they do appear. Controlling two characters at once can be challenging for players, so if this is the option you choose, the retired PC should appear sparingly.
- **Control by no one:** You and the players might decide that the character just won't appear in any more scenes at all, so neither the GM nor their original player will need to control them. They'll still be in the town or in another part of the world of the game, but only as a character they reference. Or, you and the players may decide that the character is gone for good.

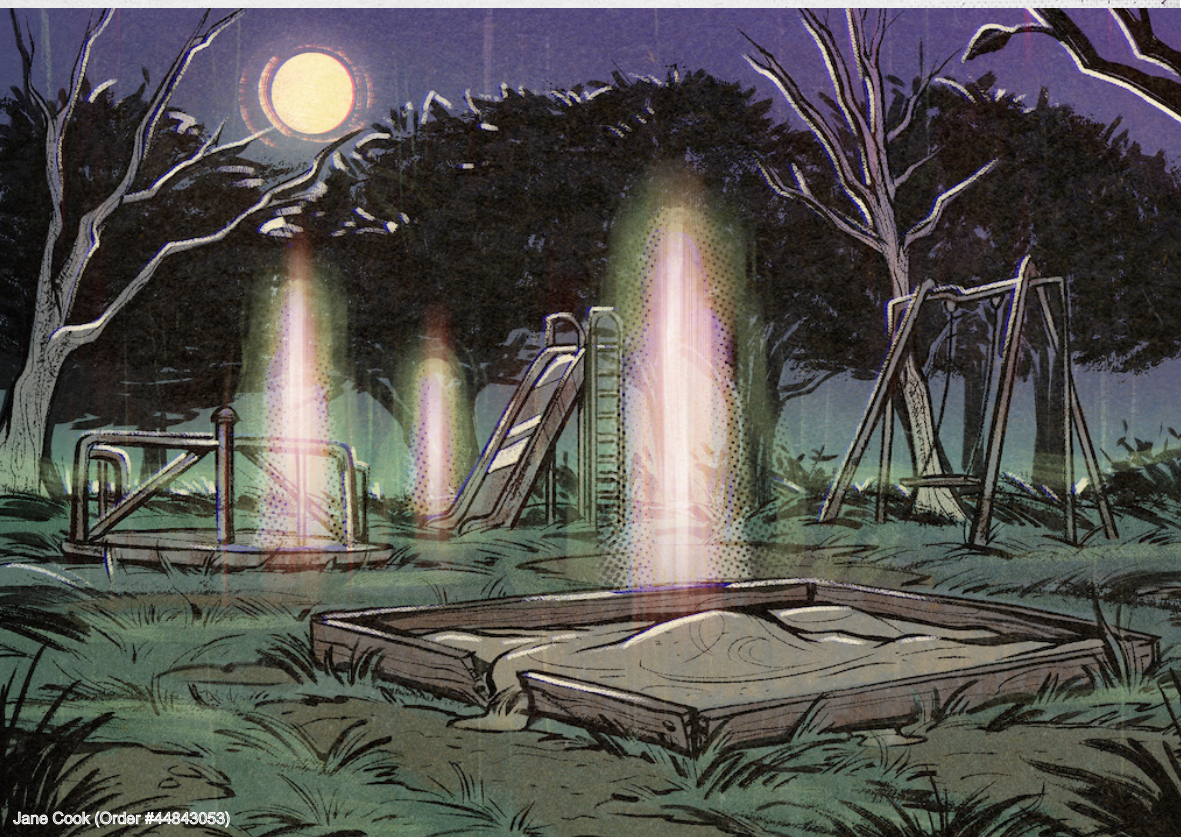
Remember, when making these decisions, players should agree collaboratively about major consequences for the game such as removing a character from it. Accord is the ideal, but ultimately, if the player who was controlling the character is staying in the game, they should get the final say in the case of disagreements. On the other hand, if the player who controlled that character will no longer be playing, they should have input into the discussion, but the decision ultimately rests with those of you who are continuing to play.

Once you've determined who'll control the character, you and the players will consider the narrative question: "Why is the character leaving the group?" No matter what you and the players choose, it will shift the game's narrative significantly. Ultimately, all of you will decide what's right for all of your group. Also, sometimes it will make the most sense to have more than one alternative occur together. Do what all of you agree to, and make sure that the character's player agrees enthusiastically. Here are some possibilities, presented in alphabetical order:

- **The Law:** Especially harmful actions, either to a person or to property, could bring police or even the court system into a character's story. The restrictions that the legal system can put on a person, even a child, should not be underestimated. Though it's important to get buy-in from the whole table for high-level consequences, it is especially important for this one, as many people have trauma related to policing.
- **Ongoing Fear:** An especially frightening event, even if it doesn't leave a permanent physical mark, may alter a character's personality. It could be that, mechanically, they gain a new Fear. Or the character could realize how much danger they've been in and refuse to continue taking the kinds of risks the rest of the group is willing to take.

- **Ostracization:** If the character has done something so dangerous that they put the whole group at risk, many of the characters may be unwilling to spend more time with someone so reckless. It might be that the character doesn't choose to leave the group, but the group may leave them. Remember, regardless of whether the character wants to leave the group or not, all players at the table must be enthusiastic about this ostracization. Though it's okay for characters to abandon a character, it's not okay for players to abandon a player.
- **Parental Involvement:** Sometimes, even a non-permanent injury will be bad enough that the parents get involved. Both children and teens may find complications in their lives if their parents find out the danger they've been putting themselves in. Especially strong parental involvement may even involve moving the family away so that the character can't get mixed up in this kind of trouble again.
- **Permanent Injury:** The character sustains some injury that, regardless of how much time passes, will never fully change. This could be as minor as a scar somewhere that no one can see, or it could be as major as permanently acquiring a disability.

This is not meant as an exhaustive list. If you have other ideas, feel free to integrate them. Moments where a character will be separated from the group should be pivotal for everyone at the table, so it's up to you to decide what will make them the most impactful.



CHARACTER DEATH

There is, of course, the option of the character dying. Although the genre is filled with horror, suspense, and risk, death is rarely a consequence for the characters. Many terrible things happen to them, but death seems to be one of the least frequent. In *Kids on Bikes*, that also holds true. There are boundless ways to hurt a character that don't involve death, such as having them infected with something terrible, having them get taken by the lurking evil, or having them be scarred by what they've seen.

Beyond the story element, character death can be a horrible experience for a player. To ensure that everyone maintains agency and choice during dire consequences, you and all of the players should have a discussion about what comes next. Though the discussion should be led by the player whose character will die, all players including you must have a voice in a decision of this gravity.

The departure of a character should have major narrative consequences. In the next few sessions, the GM should lean into the ripples that the character's departure has for the other characters. In terms of the story, the group might be trying to rescue the character or get revenge for the terrible wrong done to them. Alternatively, they might now be trying to find evidence to exonerate them, either in the eyes of the law or in the eyes of that character's parents. Whatever these ripples are, they should be the focus for at least one session.

Think, too, about how this departure changes group dynamics. Now that the character is no longer there, what can the group do now that they couldn't before—or what can't they do anymore? What tensions in the group have heightened without the character? Or what group dynamics are smoother now? These shouldn't be exclusively negative changes, nor should they be exclusively positive.

Also, after one of these major moments happens, your GM will make sure you all get to debrief at the end of the session using the tools in “Debriefing” section below.

DEBRIEFING (REQUIRED AFTER PIVOTAL SESSIONS)

Whenever a session has been particularly impactful, like including a betrayal, grand discovery, death, transformation, separation, kidnapping, or other emotionally intense moment, debrief is essential. Regardless of whether players are excited or sad afterwards, big emotions call for some time to decompress.

Go around the table and ask at least 3 of these questions, selecting them based on what makes the most sense for the particular kind of intensity that occurred during this session:

- What left the biggest impact on you this session?
- What do you think your character's feeling after this session?
- What about the story touched you most today?
- What about the story touched you least today?
- What upset you the most in this session?
- What gave you the most hope in this session?
- What scared you or creeped you out the most in this session?

Give everyone time to answer. Make sure people listen to each other and don't talk over or interrupt each other. After you and your players have a chance to discuss their thoughts and feelings, you can move into the standard end-of-game discussion, found on page 102.



THE HORROR IN THE HOUSE ON HOOK HILL

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY: SEN FOONG-LIM AND ALARA CAMERON

Ever since you can remember, stories have been told about the old house sitting abandoned on the hill at the edge of the town. All the kids in town speak about Hook Hill in hushed tones, even the teenagers who are supposed to know better - you know, the big kids who frighten everyone who's smaller, younger, or different from them? Yeah... those teenagers.

You're not sure what's worse - those big kids or whatever's supposedly haunting the house on Hook Hill...



ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

The Horror in the House on Hook Hill is a tutorial adventure for *Kids on Bikes*. By the end of this adventure your group will have built a small town, created characters, learned the rules for overcoming challenges, using the Powered Character, and worked together to start unraveling a mystery. The last section of the adventure provides some tips on how to continue the story from where this adventure ends and create your own adventures in the town where the House on Hook Hill is located.

This adventure assumes that the GM has skimmed the rules. There are callout boxes that explain the rules needed for each section and part of the adventure and page references should you need more details, or to answer specific rules questions.

Kids on Bikes is, at its core, a collaborative storytelling game that values input from players. The Horror in the House on Hook Hill is set up to provide cues for GMs who are new to this style of game, telling you when to solicit input from the players and providing space for you to incorporate those suggestions into the adventure. The adventure will guide you through any rough spots where the players are stuck in a creative rut. We hope it will serve as a template for GMs who go on to create their own adventures for their players.

While this adventure tries to address the most common challenges that you may encounter when running your first game, there may be different ways of playing that your group finds more intuitive and satisfying. View any suggestions in this document as “soft” as opposed to “hard”. They’re here to guide you, not stop you! If you feel comfortable deviating from what is presented here, go with your gut and play the way that is most fun for you and your group!

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The adventure is divided into five parts: a Session Zero Chapter, and four chapters of the adventure. Session Zero should take around 15 minutes, depending on how many players you have and how involved you want character creation to be. Each of the adventure chapters represents a 60-90 minute session of play. The fifth part of the adventure, Chapter 5, includes tips for the GM, and the GM Record Sheet, for taking notes on the collaborative setting.

CHAPTER 1: SESSION ZERO

By the end of this chapter...

The characters should know:

- ~ Each other and their relationships and connections.

The characters should have interacted with:

- ~ Nothing yet - there is no direct roleplay in this chapter.

The players should have learned:

- ~ What the different parts of their character sheet mean and how those mechanics are used.
- ~ About safety tools, the magic circle in RPGs, and the spirit of a *Kids on Bikes* game.



CHAPTER 2: THE MAIN FLOOR - THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Content Warnings: Discussion of past parent and child death, Haunting

By the end of this chapter...

The characters should know:

- ~ Two to three reasons why the house may be haunted.
- ~ A family with one child used to live on this property, as recently as a hundred years ago.
- ~ The house has two floors - a main floor and an upstairs - but no basement.
- ~ They cannot leave the house by the front door or main floor windows.
- ~ One or two facts about each other.

The characters should have interacted with:

- ~ Several features in the house (ie, decorations, doors, furniture).
- ~ The door to the upstairs, which is locked. They need to find a way through.

The players should have learned:

- ~ How to perform checks and use the core rules to overcome challenges.
- ~ How to use flashbacks to develop their character's backstory as part of play.

CHAPTER 3: THE UPPER FLOOR – THE WORLD BESIDE

Content Warnings: Discussion of past parent and child death, Flooding, Being Hunted, Isolation, Self-sacrifice

By the end of this chapter...

The characters should know:

- ~ Something tragic happened with or to the child, and the child's spirit appears to be present in the house in some way.
- ~ Several features, rumors, and historical details about the town they live in.

The characters should have interacted with:

- ~ Several decorations, rooms, and/or pieces of furniture upstairs.
- ~ The child's bedroom and the strange well in the middle of it.

The players should have learned:

- ~ How to use KoB rules to co-create a setting.

CHAPTER 4: THE BASEMENT – RETURN TO HOOK HILL

By the end of this chapter...

The characters should know:

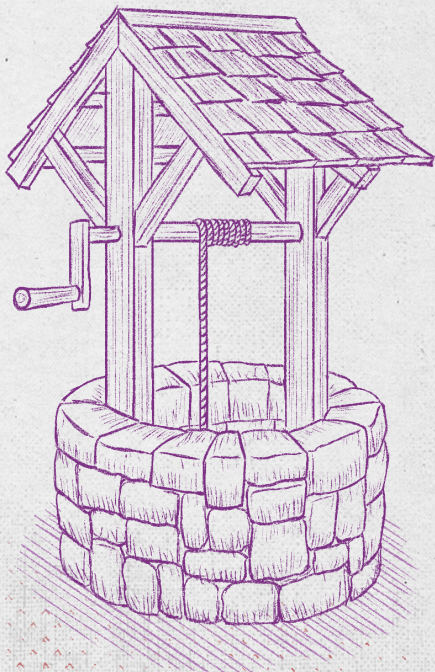
- ~ The house is on or part of a gateway to another world.
- ~ The child's spirit was trapped in the Otherworld, and has gained incredible powers due to their time there.
- ~ One or two facts about the Otherworld, such as how it physically changes those who are there.

The characters should have interacted with:

- ~ The spirit of the lost child.
- ~ Dangerous creatures in the Otherworld.
- ~ The core aspect or hook of the Otherworld.

The players should have learned:

- ~ How to use the Powered Character mechanics.



CHAPTER 5: GM NOTES

By the end of this adventure...

The characters should:

- ~ Have befriended the Powered Character.
- ~ Bonded with one another over a shared experience.
- ~ Identified several mysteries in need of investigating related to the strange well:
 - ~ The well they found in the child's room may be connected to a real well in the world. Could finding it help progress the mystery that surrounds the tragedy of what befell the child?
 - ~ The well was a passage to the Otherworld. Are there others? If so, do they work the same way? Is it possible to go there physically? What is the Otherworld, and why is it accessible at all? Are the creatures there a threat to this world?

CHAPTER 1: SESSION ZERO

Before starting a campaign of *Kids on Bikes*, there are a few things that your group will do in order to prepare to play. Firstly, you should calibrate the table's atmosphere and discuss safety tools. Each player will then create their own character. The full character creation rules can be found on page 24, but this adventure already incorporates character creation into the story. Players will begin creating characters in Session Zero and finish their characters as they explore the House. If you were not using *The House on Hook Hill* as a starting point you would also collaboratively build the town that would be the setting of your game. This adventure, however, incorporates that process into the exploration of the house as part of Session Zero.

THE MAGIC CIRCLE

The concept of the Magic Circle was first described by Johan Huizinga in his seminal work, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. He wrote that the magic circle was a “temporary world within the ordinary world” - a liminal space where play happened. Eric Zimmerman, Frank Lantz, and Katie Salen later coined the term “Magic Circle” and reframed elements of Huizinga and others’ writing for use in design. For the purpose of role playing games, the table and all of its participants should be considered to be within a magic circle: a playground that is separate from the real world where life and the game should be distinct and one should not intrude upon the other. Rules exist within the magic circle that do not have any ramifications on the real world. It’s important that the players,

especially the GM, try to maintain the sanctity of the gaming space and to not let negative aspects of the real world cross the line that is the magic circle. This makes a game more engaging and immersive. This is not to say that players should ignore real-world problems that their fellow gamers are dealing with, but that if issues are permeating into the gaming space, it may be best to stop to address them before continuing to play.

CALIBRATION / SAFETY TOOLS

Page 5 of the rules describes a process for setting boundaries. It's important to calibrate the game so that all players, including the GM, share the same expectations. This should be the very first thing you do with your group. Ideally, it's something you complete a few days before you start the game so that players can take the necessary time to think. As the GM, you should send each of your players the Pre-Game Form (which can be found in **Appendix A - Pre-Game Form** on page 154) and allow them plenty of time to complete it. Assure your players their answers will be kept confidential and honor that promise. You should also fill out the form yourself.

When all of the players have returned their forms, create a master form from all of the responses. Compile a complete Wish List (!), With Care List (-), Content Warning List (?), and Detour List (X). Once finished, share the master form with everyone.

It's important to remember that this form is a "living document," meaning that it can change over time. Discussing boundaries before playing is great, but is not always sufficient. Sometimes things come up in play or a player realizes in the moment that the story is heading in a direction that they are not comfortable exploring in a roleplaying game. Sometimes boundaries and expectations change between sessions. Safety tools are an effective way to provide players with the ability to respond to and be compassionate with each other in these situations. For more detailed information on calibration using safety tools, refer to page 5.

WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS?

To play *Kids on Bikes* you'll need characters! The introductory adventure assumes that the characters are a group of friends or acquaintances who have all agreed to spend a night in the House on Hook Hill, a house that is rumored to be haunted. To start the adventure you do not need fully built characters; you only need to decide on a few things, and then you'll be ready to go. In between the chapters of the adventure the rest of the character mechanics will be filled out. It's best to create characters together as a group, as part of character creation is interactive! To get started, have each player complete the following steps:

- ~ Choose your character's Trope (see page 24).
- ~ Write down your character's age and apply modifiers accordingly (see page 27).
- ~ Write down your character's first name.
- ~ That's it for now! Your strengths and flaws will be determined as part of the adventure.

Once all of the players have finished these steps, go around the table and complete step 5:

- ~ Answer the 'quick start' version of the relationship questions found on page 33.

This is enough to get started playing this adventure!

WHERE DOES THE ADVENTURE TAKE PLACE?

When running and playing an adventure, it helps to have some background details worked out. The following are well-known facts about the House on Hook Hill that the players' character might know or uncover. If a player asks about the house or what they know about it, share some of this information with them:

- ~ The Hooks had once been wealthy landowners and coal miners who ran into trouble with the bank when the mines ran dry and they were forced to sell off their assets one by one.
- ~ By the 1960s, the House on Hook Hill was all that was left of the once vast estate. It's not the ancestral home of the Hooks - that was bought and torn down years ago to cover the family debts. This house used to be one of the servants quarters that surrounded the original manor house.
- ~ The house has been left unoccupied since the 70s, when the last Hooks to live in town were all found dead in their home one quiet winter morning.
- ~ The last known residents of the house were:
 - ~ Mother- Miranda, a housewife who, by all accounts, was a loving mother and wife.
 - ~ Father - Benedict, a metallurgist working at his family's company Hook Mining, Incorporated.
 - ~ Son - Harrison, a precocious child who loved making up stories.
- ~ There were always rumors of a second son living there, but the police were unable to find another body when they last searched the home.
- ~ No one knows why the Hooks who were murdered were killed; the case has gone unsolved for over 20 years by the time the players enter the home.

- ~ The house is a 2-story house that is in a state of disrepair as it has not been lived in since the murders took place.
- ~ The land that the house sits on is right between the two closest towns, bringing some notoriety to both. Because of the location, neither municipality has taken responsibility for condemning the house or tearing it down.

The following are facts about the House on Hook Hill that the player characters are unlikely to know. As the game master, knowing these details can help you to ad lib should the players do something unexpected and take the adventure in a direction you're not prepared for!

What *really* happened to the Hook family (for the GM only!):

- ~ The Hooks were killed trying to protect the Powered Character.
- ~ The Powered Character had made the Hooks wealthy since the town was founded and the mines were opened in the late 1800s; the Powered Character was somehow linked to the mines.
- ~ The Powered Character took over the body of and name of Charlie Hook - one of the Hook children who had died from a severe illness.
- ~ Charlie was loved by the Hooks and lived with them, masquerading as one of the many children in the family throughout the generations over the past 100 years.
- ~ Charlie did not visibly age so no public pictures of him exist. He was always hidden away from prying eyes by his protective family.
- ~ Charlie is an extra-dimensional being that can travel to a realm known as the Otherworld.
- ~ Along with these powers, Charlie was able to sense mineral deposits, making the family wealthy in the beginning. The raw resource was depleted by the 1960s. The family over-extended themselves, thinking the mines would never run dry.
- ~ Charlie may have other undocumented abilities.
- ~ Charlie was hunted throughout his existence by beings trying to gain access to the Otherworld.
- ~ These beings - the Skral - finally caught up with Charlie on that fatal night in 1966.
- ~ Charlie's body was never found because Charlie fled to the Otherworld. His adoptive parents and brother paid the ultimate price, sacrificing themselves so that Charlie could escape.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Finally, the last thing to do before playing the adventure is set your and your players' expectations. Read or paraphrase this when you are ready to begin:

We're ready to go! I will be asking you to trust me as I guide us through this adventure. We'll be learning some of the game as we play, so please be patient -- we're all learning together! I need you to be willing to engage, willing to learn, and willing to have a good time. I'll be asking you for input from time to time. Remember that this is a co-created narrative and you, as players, have some agency in building the world that the adventure takes place in!



CHAPTER 2: THE MAIN FLOOR – THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

Each **Room** has a specific name for reference and uses the following template. **Key Words** are in brackets. These set the general atmosphere for each room and provide quick descriptors to build off of when the players ask questions about the room.

The **Description** is information that you, the GM, should provide to the players. You may add anything that you think is necessary, focusing on things that make the story specifically relevant to the player characters. You do not have to read these descriptions word-for-word. They provide the points for you to build off of.

Key Items are things of interest in the room. Anything that is not listed but is in the description can be investigated, but does not lead to “mission critical” items or information.

Player Prompts are questions that you ask specific players during game play so they can contribute to building the world and the narrative. Their answers become a “living” part of the game and are coded into the rest of the adventure via the **GM Notes** (page 149). Write down the answers the players provide to these questions, as they can (and should) be referred to later in the adventure!

GM Prompts are questions that you answer while preparing to play the game. Like the Player Prompts, these decisions will shape the adventure, weaving in and out of the game. We recommend that you familiarize yourself with the adventure prior to playing and complete all the prompts for the chapter prior to starting a session.

GM Tips and GMs Instructions provide guidance and suggestions on how to run the adventure or transition between parts of the room’s narrative elements.

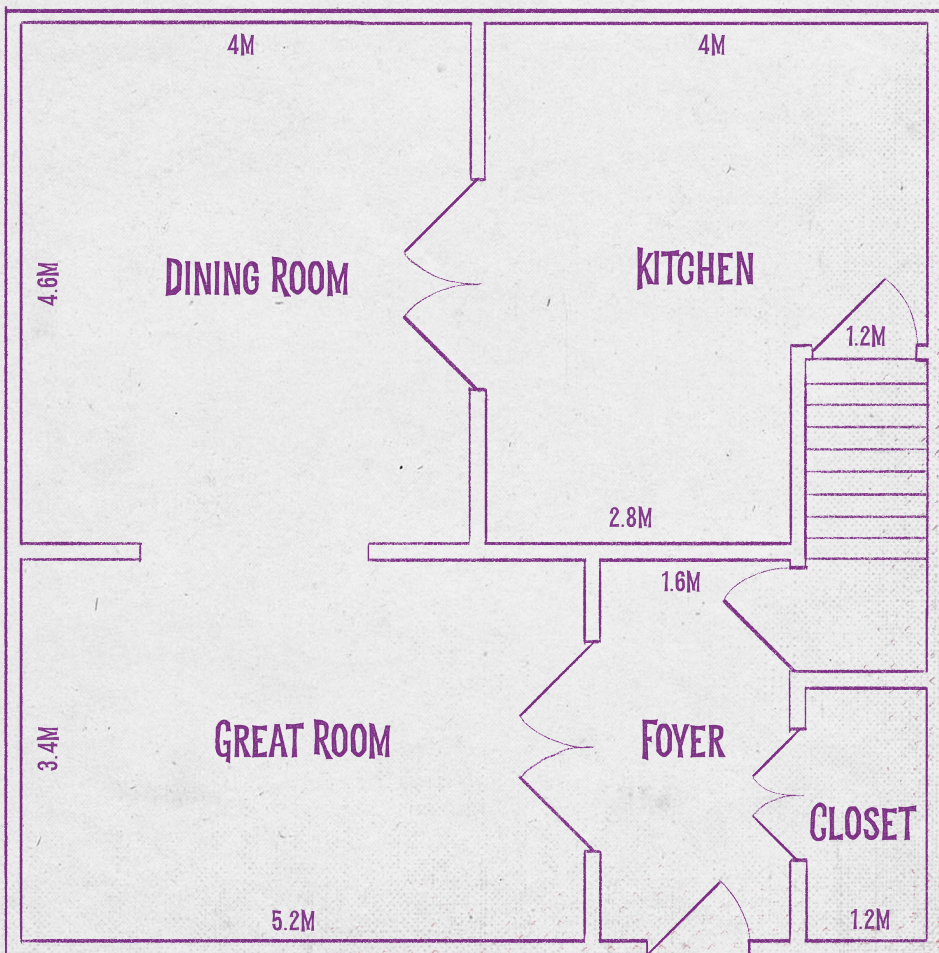
GM Notes are within a separate section in Chapter 5. This is a pre-formatted sheet for the GM to keep track of information that the players generate in the game either through their play or their narration. The items on the GM Notes page often get woven back into the story at certain key times in the adventure as written and they can be used by a creative GM as call backs at any other point. The concept that even a prefabricated adventure can be, in part, co-constructed between the players and the GM is one of the highlights of *Kids on Bikes*.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter of the adventure introduces players to the basic mechanics of *Kids on Bikes*, including rolling dice to resolve tasks, puzzle solving, and atmospheric story telling. It starts in media res, at the entrance of the House on Hook Hill just as the door closes and traps the group inside. At this point of the adventure they will each have very basic characters -- names, dice values for core attributes, and a description.

Narratively, this chapter reveals that the house is haunted, and provides characters with some insights into the family that used to live here. It is very structured, requiring the players to explore each room in sequence before they can advance. Their primary task is to gain access to the Upper Floor, which they will only be able to do by solving a puzzle in the dining room. To solve this puzzle they will need to search the kitchen for several key items.

GROUND FLOOR



THE FOYER

(dusty, slight breeze, disorientating, flickering lights)

Description: After a moment of standing on the front step of the foreboding house, you try the front door. It's unlocked - just like the other kids at school said. The heavy oak door creaks on hinges that are in dire need of some oil as, one by one, you step into the foyer. The house smells of stale air and dust.

There is a small empty closet off to the right that must have once been where the Hook family members hung their clothes. Rumor has it that this is where the police found the body of Benedict Hook, the patriarch of the last of the Hooks to reside on Hook Hill. His beheaded corpse was just lying there, so they say.

- ~ There is an open wooden door beside the closet. This door is dark, heavy oak, just like the front door of the house. It leads to a set of stairs that ascend into the darkness of the upper floor.
- ~ A set of double doors inset with cracked glass panes separates you from a large room to your left. They are thrown wide open and you can tell that the room beyond them is sparse to the point of being empty.
- ~ On the floor, in the middle of the foyer, is a scrap of fabric. You think it might be from a backpack.

Before you can do anything, a strong wind whips through the room and all of the doors slam shut violently! You turn around quickly, only to see that the front door to the house has, somehow, disappeared! You're trapped in the house, and the lights start to flicker...

GM Instruction

Immediately have the players make a Grit check (Difficulty 17) in order for them to stay calm and not lose their nerve. Players who succeed keep their composure. Give the players who failed a chance to describe how their character freaks out, and how they eventually calm down. Do the other players steady them? Do they use a breathing technique their mom taught them?

Most, if not all players, will fail this check. When a player fails, they gain an Adversity Token (page 49). See *Failing A Roll* (page 48) for more tips on failing forward. This is a good time to explain how to use AT to your players—and to give them the starting 3 AT that they all get regardless of how they did on their Grit check.

After the characters regain their composure and are ready to explore the house, ask them: Who moves first? What do you do?

Investigation Information

- ~ The fabric on the floor has a name patch stitched to it. Once a player interacts with it, ask them: "It's a torn piece of a backpack with a name patch sewn on it. It has the name of the kid from school who went missing -- what was their name?". (Write down the answer in **space B** of the **GM Record Sheet** on page 150).
- ~ The **Double Doors** lead west into the **Great Room**. These doors are unlocked.
 - ~ If a player looks through the glass of the **Double Doors** while they are closed, they see a room filled with furniture and a large painting hanging over the mantle of the ornate fireplace that somehow has logs crackling in it. The one large painting in the Great Room shows the Hook family - a tall, thin, severe looking man with blond hair, a measly mustache, and a prominent nose (Benedict, the father), a red-headed woman with a forced smile on her heart-shaped face (Miranda, the mother), and a small boy, around the age of 6 or 7, with ruddy cheeks and a spark of mischief in his eyes that somehow even the camera could capture (Harrison, the son).
 - ~ See The Foyer Notes, "A Window Back in Time" for more detail.
- ~ The **Wooden Door** leads north to the stairwell to the **Upper Floor**. This door is locked after it's closed and nothing the players do can open it until they have the **Upper Floor Key**.
- ~ Upon closer inspection, players will notice a crack in the floorboards of the **Closet**; If they reach into the crack and make a Brains check (Difficulty 7), they find a small **Iron Ball** lodged therein. If they fail the check, they find nothing and their hand gets bit by something scurrying under the floorboards.

Note: If the players come back to the Foyer after successfully seeing the blood drain towards the closet through the Windows in the Great Room doors, they can reattempt this check and it is now Difficulty 4.

- ~ **Note:** The **Iron Ball** is just one way for the players to obtain the **Iron Key**. If the players fail both of these checks, there will be other opportunities for the players to obtain an **Iron Key**, despite them not having the **Iron Ball**.
- ~ In the **Closet**, the players will also find a **Wire Clothes Hanger**.

Player Prompts

- ~ A: Who failed the Grit Check?
- ~ B: What is the full name of the kid at school who disappeared after claiming to have spent the night in this house? What type of relationship did you have with them?
- ~ C: Who did you tell that you were exploring the House on Hook Hill? What warning did they give you?

GM Tips

This is the first room in the adventure and can be used to set the tone of the rest of the game. You can embellish anything written in the description to up or down the “ewww” factor for your players, remembering the boundaries established earlier. For a higher gross-out factor, you could say that the rumors always describe Benedict Hook’s body as being headless.

THE FOYER NOTES

A Window Back in Time

When peering into the room through the cracked glass window, while the door is closed, the door into the Great Room allows players to see the room as it was in the past. If the door is opened, even a little bit, this effect is broken. If the door is closed, the effect is restored. It is not the glass that is causing the effect, but the overall weirdness of the house. If a player opens the door while peering through the window and looks into the **Great Room**, the room changes so suddenly they wonder if they really saw a painting or the crackling fire when they were looking through the window of the closed **Double Doors**.

Ghostly Voices

If the players have received the hints from the ghosts in the **Dining Room**, no checks are needed to find the **Iron Ball** in the **Closet**.



THE GREAT ROOM

(smokey, dry, dusty, faded, rat-infested, skittering)

Description: You enter what might have been called the great room back when this house was built. It's like a living room without a television. An imposing fireplace is set into the wall and, despite the fact that there couldn't have been a fire burning there for years, the faint scent of burning hardwood lingers in the air.

- ~ Anything that had adorned the walls have long since been stripped from them. There are hooks and nails, but no paintings or pictures.
- ~ The south wall has a bay window that is now shuttered and boarded up, the glass destroyed a long time ago. The house must have looked down on the rest of the town, once upon a time, like a vulture eyeing up its prey.
- ~ There is an open arch to the north that leads to what you presume to be the dining area and you can see the white tiled floor of what might be a kitchen beyond that.
- ~ As you're scanning the rest of the room, you see something silver caught in the remnants of a chair that looks like rats have used it as a nest for several generations

Investigation Information

Next to the fireplace, the players find a **Rusty Poker** and a **Small Coal Shovel** that must have been used to tend the fireplace. They are in surprisingly good shape, other than the rust! It's actually remarkable that they haven't been stolen yet!

If the group pokes around in the ashes in the fireplace, they find a **Burnt Newspaper** that has the date on it; this date is right before the last kid went missing. (**Player Prompt E**). They also find a singed note that reads:

"Lucas told me that I'd see the ghosts if I figured out this problem:

- ~ The person who enjoyed a glass of wine at dinner did not sit in the seat to the west.
- ~ The youngest family member sat as far from the kitchen as possible.
- ~ The mother did not sit where she could see directly out of the bay window.
- ~ The tea-drinker sat in the seat to the north.
- ~ The other family member drank milk from a glass."

If the players close the **Double Doors** and look back out into the **Foyer through the cracked glass**, they see the body of Benedict Hook lying there, in a pool of his own blood. If they look carefully and succeed on a Brains

check (Difficulty 7), they may notice that the blood is running into the **Closet**, like water runs towards a drain. If they fail, they are overwhelmed by the vision and will immediately want to leave the room, feeling ill.

The **Bay Window** to the south is boarded shut and cannot be opened, not even the **Rusty Poker** or **Small Coal Shovel** help the players get leverage.

Player Prompts

- ~ D: It's getting late. What kind of meal do you think you're missing at home?
- ~ E: What's the name of your town and its newspaper?

GM Tips

Try to subtly cue your players to look back into the Foyer through the Double Doors. While they may be able to find all the items without doing so, the ability of the Double Doors to see back through time is worth exploring and even expanding upon!

THE DINING ROOM

(quiet, still, cold spots around the table)

Description: This spacious room seems to be the dining room. The central pedestal of what must have been a fairly large circular table still remains in the center of the room, directly below where an ornate chandelier undoubtedly hung.

You can see the well-worn spots where chairs must have been pulled in and out many times a day as the Hook family ate their meals. The remnants of the broken chairs lay strewn around the room, none of them wholly intact.

- ~ The smell of (D)_____ seems to be coming from the east.
- ~ The dusky blue paint is peeling from the aged walls, revealing the plaster and lathe structure in places where you suspect animals have chewed through.
- ~ Along the east wall, another set of double doors is wide open connecting the dining room to the kitchen, its white tile floor still shining in the sparse light, despite years of disuse.
- ~ From almost anywhere in the dining room, you can look back through the archway into the great room where the fireplace once burned bright.

Investigation Information

- ~ The floor to the north side has some scuff marks.
- ~ The floor on the east side is heavily scuffed, indicating a lot of activity here.
- ~ The floor on the west side has strange splatter marks on it along with light scuffing.

When a player **stands on a spot where a family member sat**, they will feel a chill run from the base of their spine up to the back of their neck, making the hair on their arms stand on end, their heart beat faster, and their breathing become rapid and shallow. If they are holding the required item, they feel like they've been pushed into icy cold water and are momentarily possessed by the spirit of one of the Hooks!

When all three of the spirits have said their piece, they vacate their hosts. Whoever hosts a spirit feels the coldness of their touch linger for a momentary time span that seems like an eternity, before the spirits relinquish their control and vanish into the void.

Player Prompts

- ~ F: Once the players have heard the Hooks' tale, ask them, as a group, if they think that Charlie sounds good or evil.

GM Tips

The players could waste significant time in this room without having the full answer to the problem or the items they need. You may need to guide them through this room towards the items in the kitchen.

THE DINING ROOM TUTORIAL NOTES:

Solving the simple logic puzzle found in the cylinder to the flashlight will give the players the following information:

- ~ Benedict sat in the seat to the north; he drank tea with dinner;
- ~ Miranda sat in the seat to the east; she drank a glass of wine with dinner;
- ~ Harrison sat in the seat to the west; he drank a glass of milk with dinner;

Offer them this grid if they have difficulty solving the problem:

	Teacup	Wine Glass	Glass	North	West	East
Benedict						
Miranda						
Harrison						
North						
West						
East						

This is a classic logic grid puzzle; the players should be able to eliminate all incorrect choices by analyzing the statements made on the partially burnt note found in the fireplace to be left with only correct information that they can then act upon.

Seat	Family Member	Voice, etc.	Statement
North	Benedict (male adult)	Thin, reedy voice. Clipped, short, and to the point. Slight smell of freshly baked bread	"I made it to the front foyer, but that is where my life ended, my blood draining out onto the floor. I threw the ball with my last breath, hoping they wouldn't find it. It was the last thing I could do to keep Charlie safe. Maybe Charlie could save my family where I failed."
West	Harrison (male child)	High pitched, childlike voice. Sing-song voice. Scent of spoiled milk lingering in the air.	"Charlie wasn't really my brother, but he was my best friend. The men who came for him were bad. They hurt me until it didn't hurt anymore. I hope they didn't hurt Charlie..."
East	Miranda (female adult)	Higher pitched, feminine voice. Sorrow and kindness in her voice. Scent of citrus hangs over the area.	"When they came for him, we were already prepared. We had locked the door to the upstairs. I dropped the key down the sink in the kitchen before they got to me and my poor baby. Oh, Harrison... and poor Charlie, too - what happened to him? He wasn't really ours, but we thought of him as family."

For example, when a player stands on the spot where the eastern seat would have been and they are holding the **Cracked Wine Glass** found in the kitchen, they will be possessed by the spirit of Miranda Hook and everything they say will be in a kind, female voice until the possession abates.

Pass a note to the player with the words above copied onto it, asking the player to immediately read out the words as if they were the spirit inhabiting them.

If the players haven't already found the **Iron Ball** in the **Closet**, they can do so now without needing to make any checks. Similarly, they can get the **Upper Floor Key** in the **Kitchen Sink** drain without making checks, though they'll still need to come up with a feasible plan to obtain it (e.g. using the **Wire Coat Hanger**).

THE KITCHEN

(stagnant, moist, dripping, oozing, rotting, shadowy, dingy)

Description: Given the cabinets hanging askew from all four walls of this room, this must have been the kitchen. The air in this room is thick with the smell of mold and decay. There's a dampness that you haven't felt in other rooms of the house. A mousetrap with the desiccated corpse of a long-dead rodent is evident in the corner of the room.

- ~ There is a sink along the north wall and space for where an oven must have once been to the east. Flies buzz in the air over the sink. There's a slow and steady *drip drip drip* from the faucet as browned water slowly drops into the thick black sludge that half fills the basin.
- ~ A decrepit refrigerator stands, its once-white door closed, to the west.
- ~ There are cabinets and drawers along every way but the south where a single door stands, closed.
- ~ If memory serves you correctly, this door is directly under the stairwell that you saw leading up when you first entered the house.

Investigation Information

The players may search specific areas of the Kitchen. If they do, they find the following items in these specific areas (cupboards and drawers) in the room:

- ~ A **Dented Pot** in the **East Cabinet**;
- ~ A **Cracked Wine Glass** in the **West Cabinet**;
- ~ A **Rusty Butter Knife** sitting in the stagnant water in the **Sink**;
- ~ A **Broken Child's Glass** in the **Refrigerator**; it has a "science experiment" growing in it;
- ~ A **Bent Fork** in the **Cutlery Drawer** next to the sink;
- ~ A **Beverly Peanut Butter Jar** with buttons and pennies in the **Junk Drawer** - guess every house has one, even haunted houses!
- ~ A **Chipped Tea Cup** in the **North Cabinets**;

Of these items, only the **Cracked Wine Glass**, the **Chipped Tea Cup**, and the **Broken Child's Glass** are useful to solve the logic puzzle found in the flashlight. The rest are artifacts from a time long ago. You may make them useful later, either in this adventure or another time, but they have no special role to play in the House this evening.

The **Refrigerator** is disgusting. As soon as it's opened, every player in the room must make a successful Grit check (Difficulty 9) due to the nauseating gas that emanates from the long-closed (but unpowered) fridge. Those that fail the roll retch and vomit.

The **Sink** is also disgusting; it is filled with black sludge. Whoever puts their hand in it must make a Grit check (Difficulty 7) and they'll get the **Rusty Butter Knife**. Those who fail this check will vomit a little in their mouth as they reach down the sink - they will also be unable to search the sink further. The **Upper Floor Key** is further down the drain, where Miranda dropped it. The players cannot see below the surface of the sludge. They can try to put tools (such as the **Rusty Butter Knife**) down the drain. If they do, they will hear something clinking around down there, but the only thing that will work to eventually retrieve the **Upper Floor Key** from the **Sink Drain** is the **Wire Coat Hanger** from the **Closet** in the **Foyer**. The players must bend it into a long wire with a small hook at the end and go "fishing" with it in the sink to claim the **Upper Floor Key** from its watery grave. Players that figure out this plan do not need to make a roll to retrieve the key - sometimes a really smart plan, that's well within a character's abilities, just results in a success!

If the players need help, or ask to make a check, a character who passes a Brains check (Difficulty 8) will realize that they may need to 'fish' the key out of the drain. Passing a second Brains check (Difficulty 6) will lead to a character figuring out that a coat hanger, perhaps from the front hall closet, should be able to do the job. If they fail either of these checks, the character is out of ideas - other characters who haven't failed can still make the attempt.

If your players come up with a different solution to retrieve the key that makes sense, allow it to succeed if it's within the reasonable ability of the character's to achieve, or require a check if it would be an impressive feat of accomplishment. For example, players that try to get under the sink and break the pipe open would need to pass a Brawn check (Difficulty 9) and use a suitable tool (such as the **Rusty Poker** or **Coal Shovel**). If they fail the check, they manage to bust open the pipe and the tool they used is damaged beyond repair. Oh, and the player is now covered in vile slime - they stink!

The **Basement Door** is closed and no force on earth can open it. If players examine it carefully, they will see tool marks around the door's hinges and such where previous "visitors" have tried to access the basement using brute force.

Player Prompts

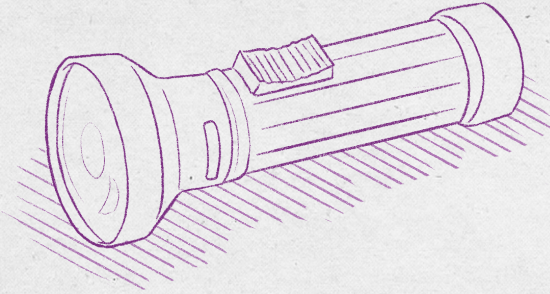
- G: Who figured out how to retrieve the Upper Floor Key from the Sink Drain?

GM Tips

Allow the players to search the room, giving them things in the order they appear above if the players are just generally searching; if they search specific areas, they find the specific things. Really play up the smells and tactile feelings of the refrigerator and sink, respectively - gross is good!

THE KITCHEN TUTORIAL NOTES:

If the players have gotten the clues from the ghosts of the Hooks in the dining room, they will not have to make any checks pertaining to the **Kitchen Sink**.



INTERLUDE: THE STAIRWELL

Read or paraphrase the following:

“You open the door to the upper floor and see a red and silver Flashlight sitting, discarded, on the bottom step of the steep staircase.”

If the players pick the Flashlight up, continue reading the following:

“You pick the flashlight up off of the bottom step, noting that it feels light. As you ponder this, the sound of your shallow breaths begins echoing for what seems to be an eternity and the echoes reverberate throughout the stairwell, creating a rhythm that pulses just slightly off-time with your heartbeat. Your head begins to swim as the echos get louder and louder.”

GM NOTE: Before the players climb to the upper floor of the house, lead them through a sequence of flashbacks during which the players further develop their characters by adding two Strengths and one Flaw (page x). While there are specific Strengths and Flaws recommended for each Trope, players are free to explore other options. You may also want to suggest that the Strength of Prepared is taken as the players have found the Flashlight, and Prepared will allow them to have batteries when needed.

GM Instruction:

As the GM, start the sequence of flashbacks by telling the players that the echos are bringing back bad memories. Have the players determine their Flaw out of character. When they have made their choices, ask them what bad memory their characters have about that Flaw; perhaps they can

roleplay a scene that shows how the Flaw got the character into a sticky situation. Then, have the players determine their Strengths out of character. Once they've picked two Strengths each, have them each explain how their character's Strengths helped them overcome their Flaws.

As their scenes end, the players find themselves at the top of the staircase and the echoing has subsided. The Strengths and Flaws they picked during this Interlude are now part of the characters going forward.

If the players closely inspect the **Flashlight**, it has some initials scratched into its shaft - the same initials as (B) _____! The **Flashlight** is not working, currently. If the players open it, they'll find that there are no batteries in it. A character with the Strength of Prepared could use it to say they brought batteries with them and now they have a working light source!

CHAPTER 3: THE UPPER FLOOR - THE OTHERWORLD

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter has the players make their way up to the Upper Floor of the House on Hook Hill and introduces players to some of the more advanced rules of Kids on Bikes, like Fear and the Powered Character. The players' characters will be more fleshed out by now, having chosen their strengths and flaws. The players will also build more of the world they're playing in throughout this chapter.

Narratively, the characters continue to explore the house in a semi-structured manner and discover more of the harrowing tale behind the fate that befell the Hooks. The Upper Floor is rife with supernatural elements and the players must solve more of the House's mercurial riddles to gain access to the attic and (somehow!) the basement...

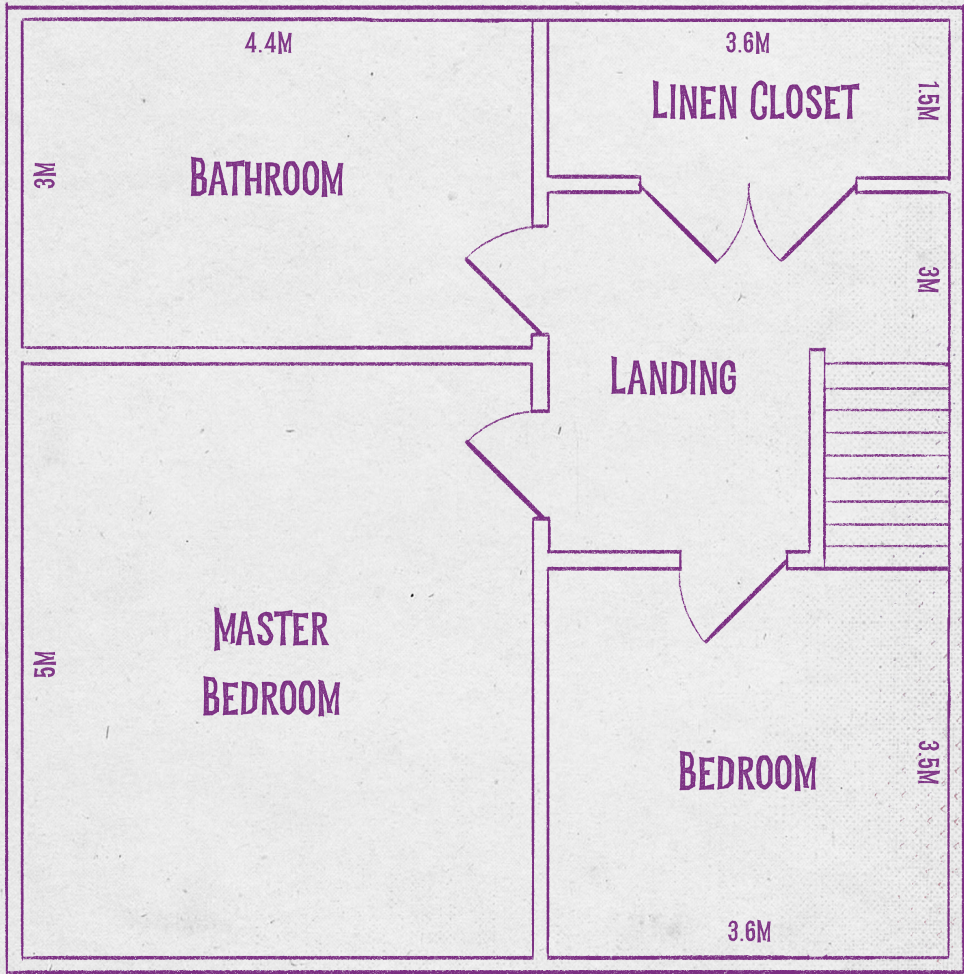
By the end of this chapter, the players will have helped complete the **Quick Town Template**:

By the early 90s, **(town name, state [E])** _____ was on the verge of economic collapse. The **(natural resource [K])** _____ mines had long been abandoned, so local employment is now at an all-time low and financial stimulus from the mining companies has dried up. **(Town name [E])** _____ is famous for its **(tourist attraction [H])** _____ but it has also gained unwanted notoriety for being the hometown of **(local benefactor [M])** _____, a real estate mogul and probable crook whose ill-gotten donations to the city are the only thing keeping the lights on in the **(important place [J])** _____. The nearest town is **(second town name, state [L])** _____.

If you would prefer using a pre-made town, you can use this one - just remember not to ask players the prompts noted above!

By the early 90s, **Pottersville, Tennessee**, was on the verge of economic collapse. The **coal** mines had long been abandoned so local employment is now at an all-time low and financial stimulus from the mining companies has dried up. Pottersville is famous for its **giant underground waterfall** but it has also gained unwanted notoriety for being the hometown of **Carlton Carruthers**, a real estate mogul and probable crook whose ill-gotten donations to the city are the only thing keeping the lights on in the **Pottersville Library**. The nearest town is **Montpol, Tennessee**.

UPPER FLOOR



THE LANDING

(chilly, windy, sterile smell, dim)

Description: Climbing up the rickety steps, you pass a broken window to your right and end up on a landing. There is a thin layer of dust on the floor, seemingly undisturbed since the death of the Hooks. There are several doors that lead into different areas of the house:

- ~ A cheaply made set of double doors made of thin, white wood.
- ~ A single door to the south that is made from darker wood. There is something attached to it.
- ~ Two doors along the west; the white tiled floor of a washroom is apparent through the gaping holes in the north west door while the door to the south west is securely shut.

You suddenly feel cold, as if the temperature has dropped a few degrees between the first and second floor. You feel a stiff breeze coming from the north west but the dust on the floor remains unstirred.

Investigation Information

- ~ The **Double Doors** open into the **Linen Closet**. In the linen closet, there is a family of bats who have gotten here through the **Attic Entry** contained inside it. The bats burst out of the **Linen Closet**, momentarily startling anyone in the **Landing** area. All players must pass a Grit check (Difficulty 16) or they are forced to immediately run.
- ~ The **Attic Entry** is impossible to find in the darkness and it is locked with an **Iron Clasp**.
 - ~ If the players have the **Flashlight** from the main floor, and they have the Prepared Strength, they have the correct batteries it requires and they can shed light on the situation. If none of the players took this Strength, they may be able to find another light source to dispel the darkness and find the **Attic Entry**.
 - ~ Once the players have found the **Attic Entry**, they can open the port into the Attic using the shelves as a ladder by using the **Iron Key**.
- ~ The **South Door** opens into **Harrison's Room**; on the door, there is a single nail and a wooden plaque with the words "Harry's Room" emblazoned on it in a child's rudimentary block printing. The door has no lock, but is shut.
- ~ The **North West Door** opens into the **Bathroom**. It is white and splintered in several places, almost as if it was chewed through. It is not open, but it is locked from the inside. If the players investigate it closer, they will find dark brown traces on the jagged edges of the holes in the door along with clumps of animal fur.
- ~ The **South West Door** opens into the **Master Bathroom**. It is closed but unlocked. There is no lock on it. Why would there be?

- ~ If any player looks out **The Broken Window**, they see a world that doesn't resemble what they know of the world they live in; it looks out on the city of approximately 20 years ago but it's during the Winter. There is a fur-like substance stuck on the windowsill.

Player Prompts

- ~ H: What Tourist Attraction do you see when you peer out The Broken Window? Why is it famous?

GM Tips

When the bats are revealed, ask the players to write down a direction in secret from the following 3 choices:

- ~ South Door (to Harrison's Room)
- ~ North West Door (to the Bathroom)
- ~ South West Door (to the Master Bedroom)



This splits the party up, but they can easily reconvene.

It's interesting to see how the players act when separated from one another!

THE BATHROOM

(chilly, windy, sterile smell, dim)



Description: The bathroom is stark white in contrast to the deeper wood tones throughout most of the rest of the house. A large claw-foot tub dominates the room, its rusted exterior contrasting with the white tiles. It must have been originally white as well, as is evident from the paint flakes on the floor. The rings where the curtain once hung is bare and pulled down from the ceiling.

- ~ A counter with a built-in double sink and cabinets below runs along the north wall. Above the counter, a cracked mirror hangs slightly off center.
- ~ A toilet with a dry bowl is at the far west end of the room.
- ~ There is a window that looks out to the north; the glass has long been shattered and a stiff cross breeze has whipped up between this window and the one in the **Landing**.
- ~ Despite the fact that every basin in the room seems to be bone dry, the floor feels wet and slippery.

Investigation Information

No matter what season it is in the real world, this room is cold. If the players look out the **Window**, it looks like the era during which the Hooks were killed. It's always Winter outside. There are claw marks on the windowsill and clumps of fur stuck to the glass.

If the players examine the **Floor**, they may find red-brown crust in the grout - blood, perhaps? The splinters on the door seem to have the same stains.

The **Mirror** in the room is cracked. If the players get close to it, it clouds up as their warm breath hits the cold glass.

If this is the first time the players encounter a Mirror on the upper floor, the players are all assaulted by mental images of their greatest Fear (page 38). Each player in the scene must describe their Fear and they have to use their lowest stat to beat a check with a Difficulty of 5 - this means that, to succeed, a player must roll a Lucky Break (page 50). Perhaps it would make most sense if a character's greatest fear was related to their lowest stat, somehow. If a player fails this check, they will now see their greatest fear in any future scene where there is a Mirror in the house - they are subject to the Fear rules (page 38) for that entire scene! Remember that players may spend Adversity Tokens to ignore their Fear.

If this is the second time they're encountering a Mirror, players with Fears will see them reflected in the Mirror again and be subject to Fear rules for the remainder of the scene. Again, they may spend Adversity Tokens to swallow their Fear.

Anytime a player goes near one of the **Sinks** or the **Toilet**, they (and only they) hear a small, child-like voice whispering things like "I'm afraid," "It's dark down here," "I'm lost," "I'm all alone," "I'm hurt," "I miss Harrison and the Hooks; they were so nice," "They're going to come soon," "They're going to find me!" etc. Is it just the wind?

The **Bathtub** is clogged with a mechanical stopper. If a player lifts the lever to open it, everyone in the room hears the child's voice. It's saying the same things. If the players respond, the voice will reply, getting more and more upset about something that's coming to get him. The voice identifies itself as Charlie - the second son of the Hooks. Charlie eventually starts crying and telling the players the story of how the bad people came and killed the Hooks - that Miranda and Harrison hid in the kitchen but the bad people broke in. Charlie says that Miranda locked him upstairs and that the bad people couldn't follow but they sent something after him... he calls it a "Skral". Charlie says that he fought back and escaped to the attic, but the thing escaped out the window before he could defeat it. It's still hunting for him. As Charlie finishes this horrible tale, water starts to erupt from all of the basins (sinks, toilet, and bathtub), causing the room to flood. Each player must succeed on a Brawn or Flight check (player's choice) to keep standing (Difficulty 8). The water won't drown anyone as it'll flow out of the hole in the door and the window but it knocks all of the players who fail and anyone in the Landing at the time of failure all the way back down the stairwell, perhaps splitting the party!

Player Prompts

- ~ I: Who or what do you think killed the Hooks and why?
- ~ J: When you look out the window, you see a place that is very important to the townspeople in (E) _____; what is it and why is it important?

GM Tips

This is where things can get pretty scary. Check Pressure when discussing the deaths of Miranda and Harrison (particularly Harrison, as he is a child at the time).

THE MASTER BEDROOM

(ornate, dark, somber)

Description: This room is fairly dark, compared to the other rooms in the house. A large 4-poster bed (3 of the posts have long since collapsed) is in the center. Clothes are strewn across the floor as if someone was searching through the closet and dresser. Scratch marks scar the wooden floors.

- ~ A set of drawers, all of them dumped on the floor, stands in the corner, a large mirror above it.
- ~ A jewelry box lies in disarray nearby.
- ~ There is a window in the southern wall that would look out into the front yard if the curtains weren't drawn so tight.
- ~ A glass-doored cabinet, about 5 feet tall, somehow miraculously intact, rests along the western wall of the Master Bedroom. It looks like something that would be more at home in a sitting room, showing off all of the Hook family heirlooms in fine style. Inside there are holders, platforms and little label plaques as if it once held many items of curious origin. You're surprised that it's intact after all these years - it looks like it must still be worth something! Looking at the plaques you see that they're all the names of metals or other elements. That'd be strange, but Benedict Hook was a metallurgist by trade, if you remember correctly.

Investigation Information

If players open the **Curtains**, bleached white light streams into the room, no matter what time of day the players think it may be. It is, again, a Winter scene. Use this to ask questions about the town and the kinds of people who lived here in the past as well as the present.

The **Mirror** in this room is framed in wood and shattered in several places, creating a disturbing picture of whoever is reflected in it.

If this is the first time the players have encountered a Mirror on the upper floor, they are all bombarded with images from the Mirror that portray their greatest individual Fear (page 38). Each player in the scene must describe their Fear and then beat a check of their lowest stat (Difficulty 5) which requires a Lucky Break (page 50). Ask players to frame their Fear through the lens of their lowest stat. Players that fail this check are haunted by their Fear and will be subject to Fear in any future scene in the house where there is a mirror. Players may spend Adversity Tokens to ignore their Fear for a scene.

If this is the second time the players encounter a Mirror, players with Fears will see their Fears reflected in that Mirror. They will have to follow the penalties for having Fear for the remainder of the scene unless they spend Adversity Tokens to avoid those penalties.

The **Curio Cabinet** to the west has 6 shelves protected by jeweled glass doors. Each shelf has a plaque and an object next to it. One of the shelves has a plaque, but no object. Each plaque bears the name of a chemical element on it.

From top to bottom, the cabinet looks like this when the players first encounter it:

Shelf	Plaques	Item
1	Nickel	Empty
2	Sulfur	Silvery-gray metal
3	Iron	Reddish-brown pipe
4	Copper	5-cent coin from 1962
5	Beryllium	Soft, silvery-white metal ball
6	Potassium	Pale yellow crystal egg that has a slight odor about it

The goal of the players is to match the items to the plaques and then rearrange the plaques and items in the correct order to spell CUBES and KNIFE. This is one of two solutions:

Shelf	Plaques	Item
1	Copper (Cu)	Reddish-brown pipe
2	Beryllium (Be)	Silvery-gray metal
3	Sulfur (S)	Pale yellow crystal egg that has a slight odor about it
4	Potassium (K)	Soft, silvery-white metal
5	Nickel (Ni)	5-cent coin from 1962
6	Iron (Fe)	Iron Ball

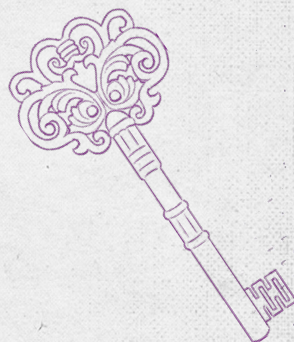
The other solution switches the shelves 1-3 for 4-6 and vice-versa (spelling KNIFE then CUBES). In either case, when the last item is placed and the jeweled glass doors are closed, the whole cabinet vibrates with intense energy and there is a flash of white light as all of the elements on the shelves melt and drip down into a hidden 7th compartment on the bottom of the cabinet.

As the players view the alchemical processes happening before their very eyes, the GM can ask the players the questions in the Player Prompt area, having one player answer a question, then another player answer a different question, and so forth.

Once they've all answered a question, the drawer slides open with a hiss as steam to reveal a newly-formed **Iron Key**. It, and the whole cabinet, in fact, is hot to the touch!

Iron Key

This key opens the locked panel to the **Attic** found inside the Linen Closet. When the panel is unlocked, it opens upwards into the darkness, leading up into a musty and foreboding crawl space that must be just below the peaked roof of the house. The smell of mothballs permeates the air.



Player Prompts

- ~ K: The vapors from the alchemical process are pungent and the smell shocks your senses. As you stare through the glass, you're hyper aware that something strange is happening... somehow... you're at the Town Hall and you see a man who you somehow know is Benedict Hook. He's arguing with someone about the mines, as usual. What resource was mined in (E)_____?
- ~ L: As you stare at the liquid metal congealing and dripping down through the glass, time seems to slow down and your mind drifts - you're in your parent's car and you're driving out of (E)_____. As you reach a nearby town, you see a sign that says "Welcome To..." What is the name on the sign?
- ~ M: The humming sound emanating from the cabinet permeates the room and you wince as the vibrations reach an unbearable pitch. Suddenly the sound stops and when you open your eyes you see someone that everyone in (E)_____ grumbles about, despite the contributions they've made to the town. Who is it and what have they done that both helps the town and furthers their own darker agenda?
- ~ N: Who picks up the **Iron Key** when it is finished forming?

GM Tips

You may also wish to give the players manipulatives for the shelf plaques and items. Pictures with words on cards can really help minimize memory strain for the players.

If the players are stuck on this puzzle, you can roll a tiered check for Brains and give the majority of the answers to the players who rolled the best, then some to the second best, and so on etc. (see Page 47).

- ~ Beryllium is silvery-grey
- ~ Potassium is a soft metal
- ~ Potassium's elemental symbol is K - isn't that bananas?
- ~ Iron's elemental symbol is Fe not I - that's Iodine.
- ~ Sulfur smells like rotten eggs - like someone farted!
- ~ Copper should be Co, but it's Cu - whoever decided that should be arrested!

So, in a group of 4, the player who rolled the highest would receive clues 1-3, the player who rolled the second highest would receive clues 4-5, the player who rolled the third highest would receive clue 6, and the player who rolled the lowest wouldn't have anything useful to contribute. You should give these clues to the players on slips of paper or sticky notes to encourage them to roleplay the solution.

GM Note: To amp up the eeriness, have the players see into the past as they look through the glass to peer into each shelf of the curio cabinet.

HARRISON'S ROOM

(messy, cluttered, warm, out-of-time)

Description: This must have been the room where the Hook's son, Harrison, slept. All of the stories you've heard say that Harrison was only 9 or 10 when he was killed. The faded pin-ups of TV cowboys and a stray baseball card on a dresser indicate that those stories weren't too far off. Toys long left unplayed with are strewn across the floor, as if abandoned in a hurry.

- ~ Unlike the lower floor, it doesn't look like as many visitors have made it to the upper floor. It looks relatively undisturbed except for the bed. The mattress has been tossed to the side and it looks like someone slashed it open with a blade, as if searching for something. The stuffing is strewn across the floor.
- ~ There is a window to the south.

Investigation Information

The Window to the south reveals the same view - one that is of an older version of the time in the season when the Hooks were murdered. It's as if the house is stuck in a very specific instance in time. If the players look carefully out the window, they'll notice a nail in the windowsill with a nearly invisible fishing line tied around it. The line leads out under the broken window pane. If the players lift the pane up, they can pull the line, which has something substantial attached to the other end. At the other end of the 3-foot line is a **Rusted Tin Lunch Pail** with the Lone Ranger depicted on it. In that lunch pail, the players find a **Rubber Ball** and **Jacks**, some **Marbles**, a few more baseball cards (Harrison apparently liked the Yankees), and **The Diary**.

The Diary

A small notebook with a well-worn spine. Bold letters on the faded faux leather cover spell out "Top Secret" in red ink. The pages inside are filled with erratic scribbles and child-like printing. You read some of the more legible entries and get the sense that it's a retelling of Harrison's adventures with Charlie. It starts off very innocently, with Charlie coming to live with the Hooks. The stories go on for several years, with Harrison writing about his adventure with Charlie, claiming, as boys will sometimes do, that they traveled to a distant land defying imagination - a place Harrison referred to as "The World Beside". The writing, however, then turns into strange symbols and almost random scratches.

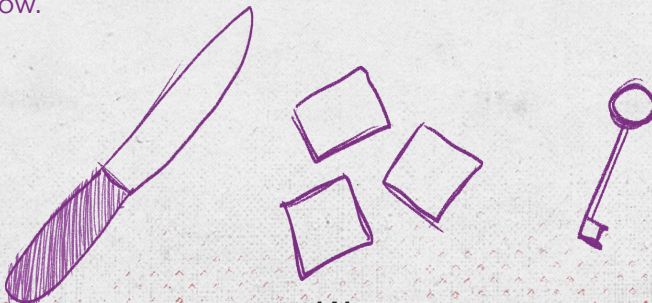
As the players continue to read the diary, the symbols seem to rise off the pages and spin around in the air. Harrison notes that he and Charlie needed to remember these symbols to go play in The World Beside. Something about these symbols is related to a curio cabinet that his parents had.

Player Prompts

- ~ O: The diary entry also describes a situation in which that door needed to be locked, forever. What was the situation that Harrison retells in his diary? What's behind the door?

GM Tips

When the players learn about the symbols, the GM shows the players the images of a crudely drawn knife, a bunch of cubes, and a key as provided below.



INTERLUDE 2: THE ATTIC

Description: The group pulls themselves up into the attic, one at a time, pushing from below and pulling from the top.

As the last of the group clambers up through the small entrance into the space above the Linen Closet, your eyes adjust to the dimly lit attic. You find yourself briefly reflecting on your and your companions.

Take a moment to finish your characters. You just need to write down their Motivation, Knack and the contents of their Backpack. When doing this, think about what's happened so far, how you have approached problem solving, and what that tells you about who your character is.

GM Note: It may be helpful to read the rules for each of these items to the players before they make their decisions. The page references for the last part of character creation are noted below.

- ~ Motivation (page 37);
- ~ Knack (page 39);
- ~ Backpack (page 39);

While the players finish their characters, you should decide on the Powered Character's starting Aspects. To create the Powered Character, choose 2 Aspects per player, write them each on a separate note card. 15 Aspects are provided below; select from those, or write some of your own. Make sure you select at least one Power Aspect per player (so that each player can have a Power Aspect if they want to).

Once you finish preparing the aspects, set them aside. You will need these at the start of the next chapter. For any that indicate a character reference in brackets, replace that reference with the name of a character that fits the description.

- ~ Charlie admires (G)_____ [*the character who first got the **Upper Floor Key** out of the **Sink Drain** in the **Kitchen***].
- ~ Charlie is very curious about (N)_____ [*the character who first touched the **Iron Key** in the **Curio Cabinet***].
- ~ Charlie feels protective of (A)_____ [*a character who failed the **Grit** check in the **Foyer***].
- ~ Charlie is inquisitive.
- ~ Charlie is untrusting of most strangers.
- ~ Charlie is fearful of the Skral and will gravitate towards [the character with the highest Brawn or Fight].
- ~ Charlie is playful and childlike despite having existed for several centuries.
- ~ Charlie draws many things from his memories and dreams.
- ~ [Power] Charlie can turn glass into a window into the past.

- ~ [Power] Charlie can create believable illusions of places he has been.
- ~ [Power] Charlie can make a sleeping person experience lucid dreams.
- ~ [Power] Charlie can make a dream be shared by people who are in the same room.
- ~ [Power] Charlie can communicate with people through dreams.
- ~ [Power] Charlie knows the elemental composition of any object by touching it and can sense elemental deposits over great distances despite intervening substances.
- ~ [Power] Charlie can transmute any element into another raw, non-radioactive element; note: Charlie cannot create something out of nothing and cannot shape the elements he transmutes into different forms.

-- Break Point --

If you need a break, this is a good moment to stop, stretch, get food, or stop the session and plan to pick up the adventure right here next time.

Once everyone has finished their characters and shared what they want to with the others, continue the adventure into the attic.

The attic is the players first opportunity to co-create a part of the world with you. The Powered Character has created an illusion of a meadow, and as the players explore it, they will get to decide some of what they see in this meadow. Take notes because this meadow reflects a real place in the town, and some of the things the players contribute to this illusion should be echoed in some way in the real meadow.

Description: As your eyes adjust you find yourselves, not in a dusty attic, but a Lush Green Meadow. It's so vibrant that the colors seem almost too vivid to be real, but the players have a sense that this place actually exists, somewhere.

Player Prompts

As soon as you finish reading the description above, ask each player what feeling their character is filled with and what their character sees in the attic/meadow that makes them feel this way. Go from player to player and note anything they say.

Investigation Information

As the players roam this vast meadow, which fills more space than the square footage of the house many times over, they will see many odd sights that they shouldn't see while inside of an attic.

Eventually, they'll come across the sight of a **Sleeping Child** lying next to a **Wishing Well**. The **Wishing Well** looks like a classic well - a cylindrical, stone-walled structure with a bucket attached to a rudimentary winch by rope. Even the roof atop the winch seems like it's out of a children's book. The child has their back turned to the group and they are unable to rouse them with words, even with shouting.

- ~ If anyone in the group shouts, the whole meadow seems to rumble as if struck by an earthquake!
- ~ If they try to throw anything into the Wishing Well, a vortex forms, sucking whatever they threw into the well down in a dizzying spiral followed by everyone in the group! **Proceed to the next chapter.**
- ~ Once someone moves towards the Sleeping Child, they first notice that the child's clothing and hair is wet, and then reality warps and they are sucked into the well just before they reach the child. **Proceed to the next chapter.**

GM Tips

In co-created storytelling, it is very empowering to give the players agency to narrate as they see fit from time to time. In this case, none of what they say is incorrect as it's a vision that Charlie is projecting into the Attic space. As Charlie is currently trapped inside a laundry machine (see Chapter 4), wants help. However, he is also scared and as a result the vision is also trying to prevent the Well from being seen at first.

Do all of the players see the same thing? Do all of the players see something different? Who believes what they see? Could it be real?

This is a good time for the players to roleplay with each other. You can seed that by prompting players that they each see something slightly different and then encouraging them to discuss it in character.

This scene is also your opportunity to try making up a few things yourself as a Game Master. Introduce a challenge, an obstacle between the character's and the sleeping child, use a skill check. Put some of what you've learned reviewing the rules and playing the previous two sessions into practice.

Once in the Lush Green Meadow, players will see birds, clouds, the sun, etc. - things that should not be seen inside of an attic. It's up to you to make this seem 100% normal and 100% weird at the same time.

CHAPTER 4: THE BASEMENT – RETURN TO HOOK HILL

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

During the interlude in the attic the players discovered the Powered Character through an illusion he created. In this chapter they find themselves slowly drawn into the Otherworld to the place where the Powered Character is currently trapped. This session starts out with the players somehow in the basement of the house, which they may have realized on the first floor that the house doesn't have. Things quickly get weirder until they finally discover Charlie. Then, they are beset upon by beasts, the Skral, and must rely on their new companion, as well as their own abilities, to stay alive and find a way out.

Unlike the open-ended exploration of the previous chapters, this chapter is a sequence of encounters each of which will occur one after the other. If the players propose creative solutions that could skip or avoid some of the encounters, as long as you're comfortable with missing the 'tutorial' that the skipped encounter provides (if it provides one), reward creativity by having the narrative move forward in the way that makes the most sense. You can, after all, always read the rules later.

This chapter also includes lots of encouragement to get the players to co-create aspects of the world, such as allowing them to decide what the mechanics of the Otherworld are or what some of the beasts look like.

BASEMENT LAUNDRY ROOM

(moist, stale air, sulfurous, rust, grime)

Description: When your vision steadies from being pulled into the well, you find yourselves sitting on a cement floor in an unfinished basement room lit by a single incandescent light dangling from the ceiling. Looking around, there's a wash basin, a laundry machine, a rack for hanging clothes on, and several rusted steel shelves with a thick layer of dust on them. The door at the far side of the room is closed. A pale red light glows from the gap between the bottom of the door and the floor. You can smell something rotten.

You all hear a voice echo in your mind. It says, "I'm sorry. You're not supposed to be here. Since you are, please help me. It's dark and cold and wet here."

Investigation Information

- ~ If the players search the room use a Tiered Check (page 52), and the following table to determine the results. Have those searching roll, then they find everything on the chart at and below the result:

- ~ 4 or more - An empty paint can on the shelf.
- ~ 7 or more - A hammer on the shelf, covered in a concealing layer of dust.
- ~ 12 or more - A rusted crowbar on the floor under the laundry tub.
- ~ The Powered Character is inside the laundry machine. As soon as someone looks inside they find him and will gain access to the Powered Character mechanics as described in the previous interlude.

GM Tip: If the players try to progress through the door without looking in the washing machine, read the following to draw their attention back to the room: “As you try to open the door, you hear a banging coming from inside the laundry machine.”

- ~ If anyone looks up they, for a moment, think that they are looking up from the bottom of a well and can see themselves peering over the edge staring down.
- ~ They blink and the vision is gone. The ceiling is unfinished. Wood beams supporting the floor above criss-cross along with copper pipes and wires are run along them.
- ~ If a player peers under the door, ask them Player Prompt P.
- ~ The door is locked from the other side with a deadbolt. The players will need to be clever and find a solution for opening it or getting to the other side.

When the players come up with an idea, use what you learned from previous chapters to decide on skill check difficulty. Remember, failure of a check should not stop the plot in its tracks but should introduce complications. Having the group be stuck in this room isn’t narratively interesting, so a failure on a good idea for opening the door should get them through, while also introducing a complication because of how they approached the situation

For example, if they try to get the door open using a shelf as a wedge but fail the check, maybe the door still opens. Because of the failure, though, the door creaks and groans very loudly as it opens, alerting the monster in the next room to their presence and giving it a chance to hide and ambush them.

- ~ Upon opening the door the group is met with a swirling wall of mist that obscures whatever is beyond. The mist is tinted red, and the air has the faint smell of decay. If the players hesitate, the Powered Character will insist that the only way out of the room is through the mist.

Player Prompts

- ~ P: You see something that makes you believe that beyond the door is somewhere unlike anywhere you’ve ever been. What do you see?

GM Tips

From here on out the exploration of the house is not guided by a map or floor plan. Instead, the next section is another single room, and after that is a section with a list of ideas for other rooms, situations, and encounters that the group might face in The Otherworld.

HALLWAY OF DOORS

(decaying, twisting, disorienting)

Stepping through the mist you enter a hallway that is far too long to have been part of the house you were in. The walls on each side are lined with doors, no two of which match. One is plain wood with a brass handle, another is a wrought iron gate, another is a darkened mossy archway, another is one of a pair of heavy oaken doors, and on and on as far as you can see.

If the players passed the check they made to open the door or did not need to make a check, read or paraphrase:

Twenty feet ahead of you is a creature of some kind. It turns up and looks at you, and while it is strange and otherworldly, you can tell that it is full of malice.

Otherwise, as soon as they start to move down the hall, read or paraphrase:

You get as far as the first door when you hear a scratching sound above you. Looking up you see a creature hanging from the ceiling. What could only be described as saliva drips from its open maw, *drop drop drop*, onto your heads.

Player Prompts

- ~ Q: As soon as they encounter the beast, allow the players to help build the features of the beast by reading the following:

Each of you, in turn, answer this prompt. Build on what the player before you said, or add something entirely new: What about this creature strikes you as strange and unusual?

Investigation Information

- ~ The beast is hungry and the group looks like food. Remember to use checks, as well as the rules for Snap Decisions (Page X), to help adjudicate escape plans and attempts to fight the beast. If the beast is defeated, another monster appears. It can be the same kind of monster, or a new one – it's up to you.

- ~ Each door leads to another place. Opening a door or looking through an archway reveals a thick gray mist that obscures whatever is beyond it. By walking through the mist a character will enter a new part of The Otherworld. It is up to you if the mist remains behind them, allowing them to return to this hallway, or if the mist disappears forcing them to push ahead into the new area.

See the next section for ideas on what could be beyond the doors.

DOORS TO SOMEWHERE



The Hall of Doors is a unique place in The Otherworld. It is a hub of sorts. It is an endless hallway of every kind of door or portal that acts as a bridge or connection point for all of the different regions of the Otherworld, as well as many of the passageways between our world and The Otherworld.

Once it is narratively appropriate for the players to escape the otherworld, either because they came up with a good plan and executed it, or because they are about to be eaten by a monster and it wouldn't be narratively interesting for them to all die before their adventure really began, use this section to wrap up the scene.

Two exits are provided here. In one the group is assumed to have found a door leading back to their world and in walking through it step out onto the front porch of the House on Hook Hill. In the other, the group is assumed to have found a well or climbed up or down a narrow tunnel or hole and emerges from a well in the woods.

Use the exit that makes most sense for the story that is unfolding, or use these as examples to develop your own exit scenario.

DOOR IDEA LIST

- ~ **Exit 1:** A door that leads out to the front step of the House on Hook Hill.
- ~ **Exit 2:** A door that leads into an underground chamber. Tunnels lead off in all directions, and overhead you can see a beam of light coming down from a narrow chute that has been carved into the ceiling. Beasts approach from all angles. Up seems to be the only way out... if only you could get up there.
- ~ **Exit 3:** A door that leads into a room where the floor is an ankle deep, perfectly still, glassy lake. There are more doors beneath the water's surface. In the water are ribbon-like fish made mostly of teeth.
- ~ **Exit 4:** A door that opens into thin air, high above (E) _____'s surface. The town looks so small from this high up. A trail of flat discs made of (K) _____

hovering in the air extends out into the distance towards (L)_____. There's no more than two to three feet between them. Each disc looks like it has enough area for one person to stand on it.

- ~ **Exit 5:** A door that leads to somewhere in (J)_____ but it is definitely not the 1990s anymore... is it the past or is it the future?
- ~ **Exit 6:** A door that leads to (H)_____, the town's Tourist Attraction. Everything seems normal...but only at first glance.

This is the end of the introductory adventure! The next chapter has tips for how to continue the story with these characters and develop your own world using the House on Hook Hill as a starting point.

CHAPTER 5: GM NOTES

GENERAL GM NOTES

Give narrative control to the players whenever possible and make note of their additions to the story in the space provided or in the margins of this booklet if you do some impromptu ad libbing (which is 110% encouraged, by the way!). One of the most satisfying ways to make a player feel heard is if you can remember and then incorporate what they said into the storyline of the adventure or future adventures. Let them help you populate the game world with interesting people and places. Choosing names of NPCs and locations like nearby towns, streets, and other establishments gives players a sense of ownership and a commitment to the game world.. Let them do some of the heavy lifting when it comes to describing things. Let them breathe life into the world.

For example, when players go back into a room they have explored before, you can tell them that they have the eerie feeling that something has changed / is different / is missing / from when they were last in the room then ask them what that something is.

You can lead by example for less experienced players, describing a room they had previously searched from another perspective / sensation. You could describe the way the room smells or the sounds that the PCs hear in this room. You could tell them how things in the room look from different angles and perspectives or how a strange shift in the lighting has highlighted something that was once obfuscated by shadows. Describing odd sensations can make the mundane seem mysterious!

One of the best ways to build adventures is by posing questions that will lead the players to discover more about the world they inhabit. Here are some open-ended questions you might want the players to find answers to in future adventures centered around the House on Hook Hill and Charlie:

- Are shadowy agents trying to take control of the House or Charlie?
- Why is Charlie being hunted by the Skral?
- What dark secret does Charlie tell the PCs?
- How is (M)_____ linked to the House or Charlie? What is their real agenda?
- What happens when Charlie touches (K)_____?

GM RECORD SHEET

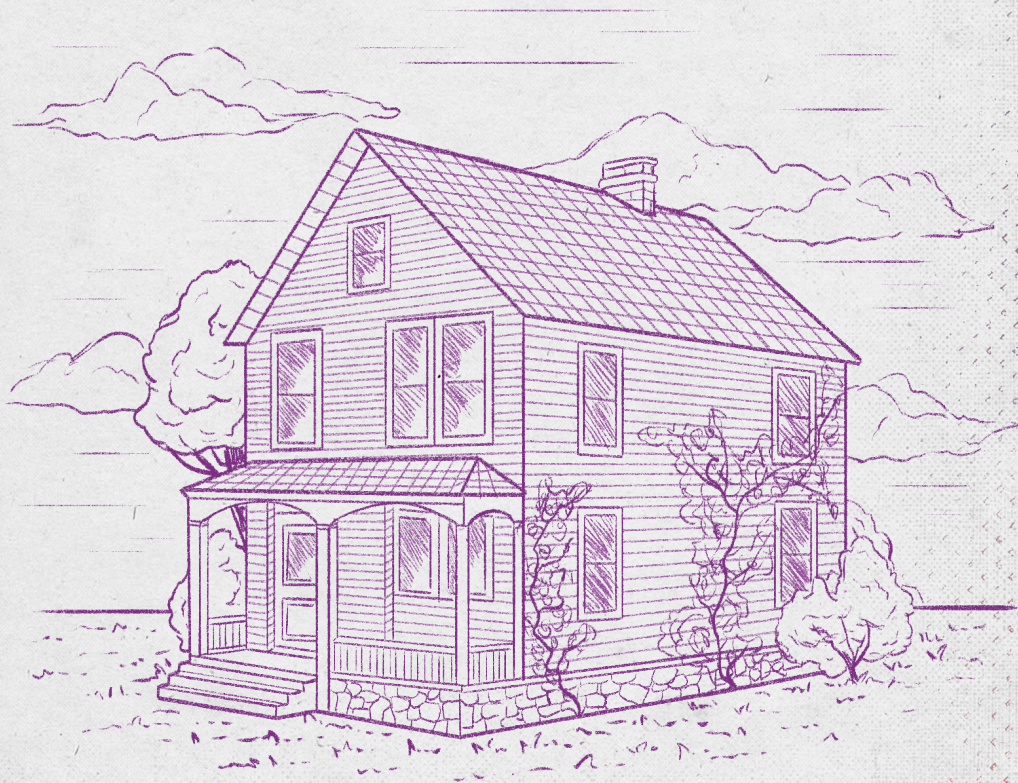
This sheet is for keeping track of the world-building that the players provide input for when asked to complete Player Prompts. These notes will often come into play later in the game as a call back or help to flesh out the world the game takes place in for future games. For most Player Prompts, ask individual players to answer the prompt's questions, noting who said what here. Ensure that everyone in the group gets an equal chance to answer Player Prompts if they desire. Pre-seeding who is going to answer which prompt can help "spotlight" individual PCs equally.

Code	Prompt	Player	Note
A	What year is it, specifically (post-1990)?		
B	What is the full name of the kid at school who disappeared after claiming to have spent the night in this house? What type of relationship did you have with them?		
C	Who did you tell that you were exploring the House on Hook Hill? What warning did they give you?		
D	It's getting late; what kind of meal do you think you're missing at home?		

Code	Prompt	Player	Note
E	What's the name of your Town and its newspaper? What State is this town located in?		
F	Once the players have heard the Hooks' tale, ask them, as a group, if they think that Charlie sounds good or evil.		
G	Who figured out how to retrieve the Upper Floor Key from the Sink Drain?		
H	What Tourist Attraction do you see when you peer out The Broken Window? Why is it famous?		
I	Who or what do you think killed the Hooks and why?		
J	When you look out the window, you see a place that is very important to the townspeople in (E); what is it and why is it important?		
K	The vapors from the alchemical process are pungent and the smell shocks your senses. As you stare through the glass, you're hyper aware that something strange is happening... somehow... you're at the Town Hall and you see a man who you somehow know is Benedict Hook. He's arguing with someone about the mines, as usual. What resource was mined in (E)?		

Code	Prompt	Player	Note
L	As you stare at the liquid metal congealing dripping down through the glass, time seems to slow down and your mind drifts - you're in your parent's car and you're driving out of (E). As you reach a nearby town, you see a sign that says "Welcome To..." What is the name on the sign?		
M	The humming sound emanating from the cabinet permeates the room and you wince as the vibrations reach an unbearable pitch. Suddenly the sound stops and when you open your eyes you see someone that everyone in (E) grumbles about, despite the contributions they've made to the town and keeps (J) financially afloat. Who is it and what do you think their hidden agenda really is?		
N	Who picks up the Iron Key when it is finished forming?		
O	The diary entry also describes a situation in which that door needed to be locked, forever. What was the situation that Harrison retells in his diary? What's behind the door?		
P	You see something that makes you believe that beyond the door is somewhere unlike anywhere you've ever been. What do you see?		

Code	Prompt	Player	Note
Q	<p>As soon as they encounter the beast, allow the players to help build the features of the beast by reading the following:</p> <p>Each of you, in turn, answer this prompt. Build on what the player before you said, or add something entirely new:</p> <p>What about this creature strikes you as strange and unusual?</p>		



APPENDICES

A: PRE-GAME FORM

Reference the Content Warning list on the next page for possible themes to include here.

WISH LIST !

Content you'd be excited to see in game.

WITH CARE LIST -

Content you don't want described or roleplayed, but that you're comfortable having referenced in game.

CONTENT WARNING LIST ?

Content you want to be asked about before including it

DETOUR LIST X

Content you don't want to appear or be referenced in the game.

B: POSSIBLE CONTENT WARNINGS

- ~ Abandonment
- ~ Ableism
- ~ Alcohol use
- ~ Alien abduction
- ~ Body horror
- ~ Bugs
- ~ Bullying
- ~ Car or bike accidents
- ~ Classism
- ~ Domestic violence
- ~ Drug use
- ~ Eating disorders
- ~ Emotional violence
- ~ Fat shaming
- ~ Gaslighting
- ~ Gendered swearing
- ~ Gore
- ~ Harm to animals
- ~ Harm to children and young adults
- ~ Hate speech
- ~ Homelessness
- ~ Homophobia
- ~ Hospitals
- ~ Human experimentation
- ~ Human sacrifice
- ~ Incarceration
- ~ Kidnapping
- ~ Loss or death of a loved one
- ~ Medical conditions/procedures
- ~ Mutilation
- ~ Neglect
- ~ Parental punishment
- ~ Permanent injuries
- ~ Physical violence
- ~ Police brutality
- ~ Police presence
- ~ Powerlessness
- ~ Racism
- ~ Religious persecution
- ~ Self-harm / Suicidal ideation
- ~ Sexism
- ~ Sexual assault
- ~ Sexual harassment
- ~ Social ostracization
- ~ Stalking
- ~ Torture
- ~ Transphobia

ADDITIONAL CONTENT WARNINGS:

C: TROPES

ADVENTUROUS SCOUT

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Brains	Brawn	Grit	Charm	Flight	Fight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: Orange, First-Aid Kit Teen: Rusty, Basket			
Suggested Strengths		Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter		Dogmatic, Gullible, Nosey, Paranoid, Patronizing, Rambunctious, Restless	Who first got you into Scouting (or more generally, the great outdoors)?	What do you have to give up to spend as much time in nature as you do?	

BRILLIANT MATHLETE

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Brains	Flight	Grit	Charm	Fight	Brawn
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: Red, Tassels Teen: Purple, Basket			
Suggested Strengths		Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2	
Gross, Intuitive, Loyal, Prepared, Skilled at..., Wealthy		Absent-minded, Clumsy, Cowardly, Dogmatic, Flippant, Picky, Self-pitying	Why do you get so much satisfaction from your academic excellence?	What have you sacrificed to be so good in school?	



CONSPIRACY THEORIST

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Brains	Fight	Flight	Grit	Brawn	Charm
Age		Suggested Bike			
Teen/Adult		Teen: Yellow, Basket Adult: Yellow, Milk Crate			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2		
Heroic, Intuitive, Prepared, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter, Unassuming	Lazy, Paranoid, Patronizing, Reckless, Restless, Superstitious, Weak-willed	What are you sure is happening in the town that no one else knows about?	How far will you go to have others believe you?		

CUNNING DETECTIVE

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Brains	Charm	Grit	Fight	Brawn	Flight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Any		Any: Blue, Pedal-Powered Lights			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Heroic, Intuitive, Protective, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter	Blunt, Callous, Demanding, Nosey, Patronizing, Prejudiced, Vindictive		What's the most impressive case you cracked?	What case could you never solve, and why does it still bother you?	

BLUE-COLLAR WORKER

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Brawn	Fight	Grit	Brains	Charm	Flight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Adult		Adult: Black, First-Aid Kit			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2		
Cool Under Pressure, Lucky, Prepared, Quick Healing, Tough, Treasure Hunter	Blunt, Envious, Greedy, Reckless, Resentful, Superstitious, Vindictive	Though it's tough work, what do you love about what you do?	What would it mean for you if you lost your job?		

DARING ATHLETE

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Brawn	Flight	Grit	Fight	Charm	Brains
Age		Suggested Bike			
Teen		Teen: Green, Pegs			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Gross, Heroic, Loyal, Protective, Skilled at..., Tough	Boastful, Gullible, Hot-tempered, Impatient, Messy, Rambunctious, Superstitious		Why do you get so much satisfaction from being excellent at your sport?	What have you sacrificed to be so good in this sport?	

DEDICATED FARMER

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Brawn	Grit	Fight	Flight	Brains	Charms
Age		Suggested Bike			
Any		Child: White, Basket Teen: Gray, Pedal-Powered Lights Adult: Rusty, Ten Speeder			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Heroic, Prepared, Protective, Tough, Unassuming	Callous, Gluttonous, Ignorant, Insecure, Messy, Petty, Rude		Why does working the land bring you so much joy?	What do you miss out on because of the time you have to put in farming?	

LAIDBACK SLACKER

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Brawn	Charm	Flight	Fight	Grit	Brains
Age		Suggested Bike			
Teen/Adult		Teen: Yellow, Banana Seat Adult: Gray, Basket			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Intuitive, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy	Absent-minded, Capricious, Deceitful, Ignorant, Lazy, Messy, Rude		What do you think of all the try-hards around you?	What are you willing to go the extra mile for?	

FUNNY SIDEKICK

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Charm	Brawn	Flight	Grit	Fight	Brains
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: Blue, Bell Teen: Orange, Trading Cards			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2		
Easygoing, Gross, Heroic, Protective, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter	Clumsy, Flippant, Gluttonous, Ignorant, Lazy, Messy, Rude	What do you do that always lightens your friends' moods?	When does being in the "sidekick" role frustrate you?		

OVEREAGER ENTHUSIAST

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Charm	Brains	Grit	Brawn	Fight	Flight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Any		Child: Black, Bell Teen/Adult: Black, Trading Cards			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2		
Gross, Intuitive, Lucky, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter, Wealthy	Capricious, Cowardly, Impatient, Insecure, Oversensitive, Paranoid, Self-pitying	How did you get so passionate about what you're so passionate about?	What have you ignored to pursue this passion?		

POPULAR KID

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Charm	Flight	Brains	Grit	Brawn	Fight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: Blue, Trading Cards Teen: Purple, Bell			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2		
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Loyal, Lucky, Skilled at..., Wealthy	Boastful, Capricious, Deceitful, Picky, Prejudiced, Spoiled, Weak-willed	Beyond people wanting to impress you and the social capital that brings, what do you like about being popular?	How do you treat the unpopular kids?		

PROM ROYALTY					
d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Charm	Grit	Fight	Flight	Brains	Brawn
Age		Suggested Bike			
Teen		Teen: Red, Ten Speeder			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Wealthy	Blunt, Hot-tempered, Petty, Self-centered, Spoiled, Vain, Vindictive		What benefits have you gained from having such a high place in the school's social hierarchy?	How did it feel the first time you heard someone say that you're "beautiful but terrible"?	

ANIMAL LOVER					
d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Fight	Brawn	Charm	Flight	Brains	Grit
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: Purple, Basket Teen: Purple, Milk Crate			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Protective, Skilled at..., Tough, Wealthy	Clumsy, Demanding, Dogmatic, Over-sensitive, Picky, Spoiled, Weak-willed		When did you get the pet that's always by your side?	Why do you feel like your pet understands you better than most people?	

MYSTERIOUS TRANSFER					
d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Fight	Flight	Brains	Grit	Brawn	Charm
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: Neon Pink, Basket Teen: White, Milk Crate			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Easygoing, Gross, Heroic, Skilled at..., Unassuming, Wealthy	Boastful, Envious, Gullible, Picky, Rambunctious, Reckless, Restless		Why is being new and mysterious so much fun for you?	Which rumor about you hurts the most?	

OVERPROTECTIVE PARENT

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Fight	Brains	Brawn	Charm	Flight	Grit
Age		Suggested Bike			
Adult		Adult: Green, First-Aid Kit			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2		
Heroic, Loyal, Prepared, Protective, Tough, Wealthy	Demanding, Dogmatic, Nosey, Oversensitive, Paranoid, Prejudiced, Self-pitying	When do you feel most appreciated by your kid(s)?	What about your kid(s) do you wish you could change?		

UNLIKELY ALLY

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Fight	Grit	Brawn	Brains	Charm	Flight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Teen/Adult		Teen: Rusty, Milk Crate Adult: Black, Pegs			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Easygoing, Gross, Heroic, Lucky, Tough, Skilled at...	Flippant, Callous, Hot-tempered, Oversensitive, Prejudiced, Rambunctious, Reckless		What makes it so surprising that you're working with this group?	Despite your aloof exterior, what do you genuinely care about?	

ASPIRING WANNABE

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Flight	Grit	Charm	Fight	Brains	Brawn
Age		Suggested Bike			
Teen		Teen: Gold, Pegs			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws	Question 1	Question 2		
Intuitive, Loyal, Prepared, Protective, Skilled at..., Unassuming	Deceitful, Envious, Gullible, Insecure, Resentful, Self-centered, Weak-willed	What would it mean to be one of the popular kids?	What would you sacrifice to be one of the cool kids?		

FREAKAZOID

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Flight	Fight	Brawn	Charm	Grit	Brains
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: Black, Trading Cards Teen: Orange, Basket			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Gross, Lucky, Tough, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy	Absent-minded, Flippant, Hot-tempered, Ignorant, Lazy, Rambunctious, Restless		What are the key components of your weirdo facade?	What are you worried people will find out about you if you drop your facade?	

GOODY GOODY

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Flight	Charm	Brains	Brawn	Grit	Fight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: Neon Pink, Bell Teen: Silver, Bell			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Loyal, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Unassuming, Wealthy	Boastful, Cowardly, Demanding, Impatient, Nosey, Oversensitive, Patronizing		Why does approval from adults mean so much to you?	Who did you recently hurt by seeking an adult's approval?	

SILVER SPOON

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Flight	Brains	Fight	Charm	Brawn	Grit
Age		Suggested Bike			
Child/Teen		Child: White, Bell Teen: Gold, Pegs			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy	Boastful, Greedy, Impatient, Insecure, Rude, Self-centered, Vain		What advantages has your wealth given you?	How does your family exploit the town to make its money?	

RECLUSIVE ECCENTRIC

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Grit	Flight	Brains	Brawn	Fight	Charm
Age		Suggested Bike			
Adult		Adult: White, Milk Crate			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Intuitive, Prepared, Tough, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy	Absent-minded, Capricious, Clumsy, Cowardly, Gluttonous, Callous, Picky		What drove you away from the world at large?	What have you gained from your time away from the world?	

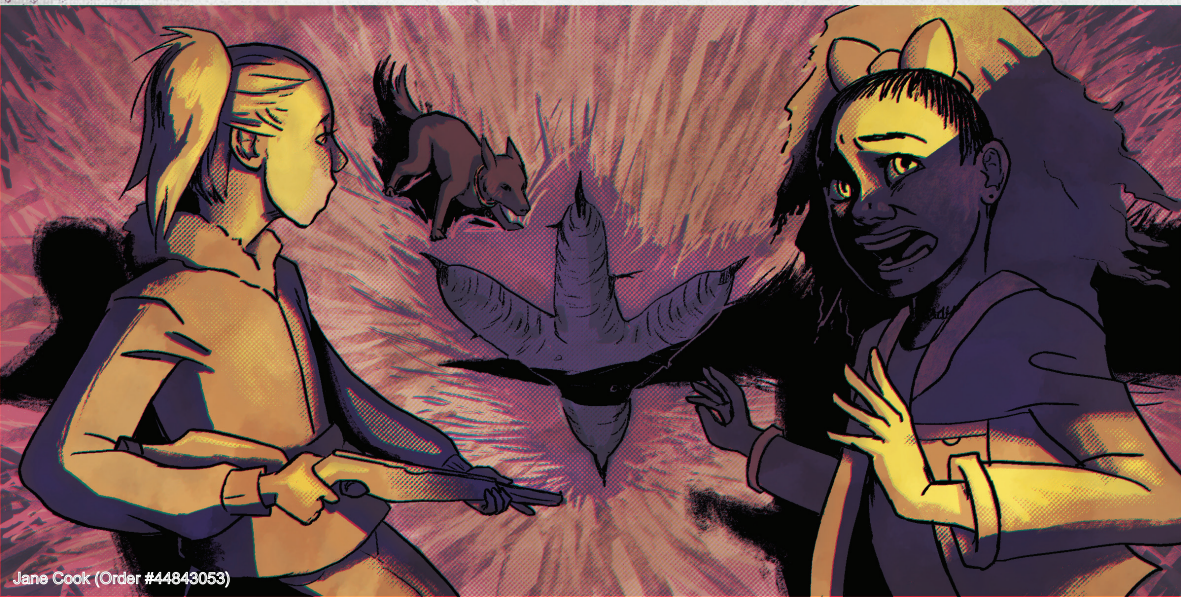
SEASONED BABYSITTER

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Grit	Charm	Flight	Brains	Fight	Brawn
Age		Suggested Bike			
Teen		Teen: Silver, Banana Seat			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Intuitive, Loyal, Protective, Quick Healing, Tough, Wealthy	Deceitful, Resentful, Self-centered, Spoiled, Superstitious, Vain, Vindictive		How did you get your start babysitting?	What's a mistake you made while babysitting that bothers you to this day?	

STOIC PROFESSIONAL

d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Grit	Brains	Charm	Brawn	Flight	Fight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Adult		Adult: Gray, Ten Speeder			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Heroic, Loyal, Lucky, Prepared	Gluttonous, Greedy, Callous, Petty, Spoiled, Vain, Vindictive		To what extent do you enjoy the work you do?	What would you rather be doing?	

YOUNG PROVIDER					
d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Grit	Brawn	Charm	Brains	Fight	Flight
Age		Suggested Bike			
Teen		Teen: Silver, Pegs			
Suggested Strengths	Suggested Flaws		Question 1	Question 2	
Easygoing, Protective, Skilled at..., Tough, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming	Blunt, Envious, Greedy, Petty, Resentful, Restless, Self-pitying		How has working to support your family improved you as a person?	What have you had to sacrifice to support your family?	



D: STRENGTHS

- ~ **Cool Under Pressure:** May spend 1 Adversity Token to take half of your die's value instead of rolling on a Snap Decision.
- ~ **Easygoing:** Gain 2 Adversity Tokens when you fail, instead of 1.
- ~ **Gross:** You have some kind of gross bodily trick (loud, quiet, smelly... up to you) that you can do on command.
- ~ **Heroic:** You do not need the GM's permission to spend Adversity Tokens to ignore Fears.
- ~ **Intuitive:** May spend 1 Adversity Token to ask the GM about your surroundings, an NPC, or the like. The GM must answer honestly.
- ~ **Loyal:** Each of the Adversity Tokens you spend to help your friends gives them a +2 instead of a +1.
- ~ **Lucky:** You may spend 2 Adversity Tokens to reroll a stat check.
- ~ **Prepared:** May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to just happen to have one commonplace item with you (GM's discretion).
- ~ **Protective:** Add +3 to rolls when defending one of your friends.
- ~ **Quick Healing:** (Free for kids; available to teens and adults) You recover from injuries more quickly, and don't suffer lasting effects from most injuries.
- ~ **Rebellious:** (Free for and available only to teens) Add +3 to rolls to persuade or resist persuasion from Kids. Add +3 to rolls to resist persuasion from Adults.
- ~ **Skilled at ...:** (Free for Adults; available to teens and, at GM's discretion, to kids) Choose a skill (GM's discretion). You are assumed to succeed when making even moderately difficult checks involving this skill. If the GM determines that you do need to roll for a more difficult check, add up to +3 to your roll.
- ~ **Tough:** If you lose a combat roll, add +3 to the negative number. You will still lose the roll no matter what but could reduce your loss to -1.
- ~ **Treasure Hunter:** May spend 1 Adversity Token to find a useful item in your surroundings.
- ~ **Unassuming:** May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to not be seen, within reason (GM's discretion).
- ~ **Wealthy:** May spend money as though you were in a higher age bracket. For example, a wealthy child is considered to have the disposable income of a typical teen, and a wealthy teen is considered to have the disposable income of a typical adult. A wealthy adult is considered to not have to worry too much about money—they would certainly be able to buy anything they need, and likely able to spend their way out of a lot of situations.

E: FLAWS

- ~ Absent-minded
- ~ Blunt
- ~ Boastful
- ~ Callous
- ~ Capricious
- ~ Clumsy
- ~ Cowardly
- ~ Deceitful
- ~ Demanding
- ~ Dogmatic
- ~ Envious
- ~ Flippant
- ~ Gluttonous
- ~ Greedy
- ~ Gullible
- ~ Hot-tempered
- ~ Ignorant
- ~ Impatient
- ~ Insecure
- ~ Lazy
- ~ Messy
- ~ Nosey
- ~ Oversensitive
- ~ Paranoid
- ~ Patronizing
- ~ Petty
- ~ Picky
- ~ Prejudiced
- ~ Rambunctious
- ~ Reckless
- ~ Resentful
- ~ Restless
- ~ Rude
- ~ Self-centered
- ~ Self-pitying
- ~ Spoiled
- ~ Superstitious
- ~ Vain
- ~ Vindictive
- ~ Weak-willed



Reminders:

- Roll a d20 and answer that question about the character you're establishing a relationship with. If the question doesn't fit what you have in mind for that relationship, feel free to reroll or choose another question.
- Once you've answered, remember to cross out the question so that you don't answer that question about another character—and so that other players don't answer the same question.
- If you roll a question that has already been answered, choose the question above or below or reroll.

F: RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS FOR A CHARACTER YOU KNOW (POSITIVE)

1. Why do you feel forever indebted to this character?
2. What do you secretly admire about this character?
3. What great kindness did this character do for you that they did without thinking about it—but that meant the world to you?
4. What part of this character's personality do you realize is exceptional that they do not?
5. In what way do you care for them that they can't or won't reciprocate?
6. How did this character contribute to the best day of your life?
7. What plan do you and this character have that most excites you?
8. What is your private nickname for this character and why?
9. When did this character surprise you with how far they'd go to help you?
10. What are you sacrificing to protect this character, and why are you so willing to make that sacrifice?
11. You often feel the need to stand up for this character. Why are you willing to go so far for them?
12. What bond do you share with this character that can never be broken?
13. What about this character makes you so happy?
14. What tremendous act of bravery did you see this character do?
15. What do you and this character have a mutual love of that no one else in town seems to like?
16. You recently thought you lost this character. How? Why was that so upsetting?
17. What aspect of this character's personality do you try to use as a model for your own?
18. When did you first realize that you loved this character—either platonically or romantically?
19. You've been in awe of this character since you met them. How did they make such a strong first impression?
20. Why do you treasure a seemingly valueless item this character once gave you?

G: RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS FOR A CHARACTER YOU KNOW (NEGATIVE)

1. What did this character once do that you still resent them for?
2. What secret are you keeping from them, and who would be devastated if they found out?
3. You're sure this character is hiding something from you. How do you feel knowing they're deceiving you?
4. What does this character have that you want to take from them?
5. This character regularly does something that hurts you, perhaps without knowing it. What is it, and why do you think they keep doing it?
6. How did this character contribute to the worst day of your life?
7. What dishonest thing did you see this character do that still bothers you to this day?
8. How does this character keep putting you both at risk? Why do you think they do that?
9. What does this character often do that makes you irrationally angry?
10. How do you think this character is self-sabotaging? Why can't you empathize?
11. What part of this character's personality scares you? What does that say about you?
12. You can't forgive this character for something they did. What is it and why can't you?
13. What dangerous behavior has this character recently started engaging in? How could it affect you?
14. What is your plan to get revenge on this character, and what misunderstanding led you to make this plan?
15. Why do you dislike this character when most of the town seems to love them?
16. You hurt this character years ago. Why can't you apologize?
17. What do you intentionally do to annoy this character? What do you get from their response?
18. How did this character betray you the last time you confided in them?
19. This character hurt someone close to you. Why haven't you accepted their apology even though the person they hurt has?
20. What do you owe this character? Why do you refuse to repay them?

H: RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS FOR A CHARACTER YOU DON'T KNOW

1. What good thing have you heard about this character that you can't believe is true?
2. Why do some members of the town seek out this character?
3. Recently, this character did something great for the town. Why was it so surprising?
4. What charming habit is this character known for throughout the town?
5. What strange record does this character hold in the town?
6. Why is this character's family so important in the town?
7. Which influential townspeople always speaks highly of this character and why?
8. Based on what you know, how is this character different from the rest of their family?
9. Why are you going out of your way to get to know this character?
10. What bad thing have you heard about this character that you can't believe is true?
11. What do you selfishly hope to gain from this relative stranger?
12. What bad reputation does this character have around the town?
13. Who does this character have a very public feud with?
14. Why are so many townspeople afraid of this character?
15. What do you want out of this relationship for your own selfish benefit?
16. How is this character threatening their family's reputation?
17. What scandal in the town was this character involved with?
18. How did you embarrass yourself last time you tried to get to know this character?
19. What rumor is whispered about this character around the town?
20. You know that this character is interested in getting to know you. How did you find that out?

I: BONDED ACTIONS

- ~ **Best Frenemies:** After one of you succeeds on a roll and brags about their success, the other gets +3 on their next roll. If they succeed and brag, the first character gets +3 on their next roll, then the bonuses end.
- ~ **Calming Presence:** When one of you is exposed to a Fear, the other can talk them down, allowing them to ignore any impacts of that Fear.
- ~ **Deep Thinkers:** When making a relevant Brains check together, use either character's roll, then add an additional +3 to that roll.
- ~ **Friends' Cant:** As long as you and this character can communicate in writing or verbally, you can pass information to the other without anyone else understanding your meaning.
- ~ **Heavy Lifters:** When making a relevant Brawn check together, use either character's roll, then add an additional +3 to that roll.
- ~ **Helpful Mentorship:** When the mentee in the relationship fails a roll, the mentor can offer advice. If they do, both characters gain 2 AT.
- ~ **Known Location:** Either character can intuit the location of the other, regardless of how improbable their location is and regardless of how little information the other has.
- ~ **Mind Readers:** By making eye contact, both characters can, within reason, communicate what they're thinking to each other.
- ~ **No-Look Pass:** One character may throw the other player an object that both can easily lift, and the other character can catch it without looking and without making a check.
- ~ **Relay Team:** When making a relevant Flight check together, use either character's roll, then add an additional +3 to that roll.
- ~ **Standup Comedians:** The two characters can, within reason, keep the attention of a crowd by being incredibly funny together.
- ~ **Sweet Talkers:** When making a relevant Charm check together, use either character's roll, then add an additional +3 to that roll.
- ~ **Sworn Protector:** Either character can suffer the effects of the other character's failed check to protect them.
- ~ **Tag Team:** When making a relevant Fight check together, use either character's roll, then add an additional +3 to that roll.
- ~ **Tough Cookies:** When making a relevant Grit check together, use either character's roll, then add an additional +3 to that roll.

J: BIKES

Each bike has two features: a color and an upgrade. Together, they determine what benefits you receive when you're riding that bike. Players may create their own bike or choose the one recommended as part of their Trope.

BIKE COLOR	BENEFIT WHILE RIDING THE BIKE
Black <i>Intense</i>	You get +1 to Fight checks.
Blue <i>Trustworthy</i>	You get +1 to Charm checks.
Gold <i>Flashy</i>	If you perform a stunt, you get +3 to Charm checks against any characters who witness the stunt.
Gray <i>Level Headed</i>	If you know the area, you cannot get lost.
Green <i>Strong</i>	You get +1 to Brawn checks.
Neon Pink <i>Fast</i>	You get +1 to Flight checks.
Orange <i>Outgoing</i>	Each time you succeed at a check, an ally of your choice receives one Adversity Token.
Purple <i>Decisive</i>	You may treat Snap Decisions as Planned Actions.
Red <i>Ambitious</i>	Each Adversity Token you spend during a check adds an additional +1 to your roll
Rusty <i>Tough</i>	You get +1 to Grit checks.
Silver <i>Noble</i>	You have the Protective strength.
White <i>Confident</i>	You get +1 to Brains checks.

BIKE UPGRADE	BENEFIT WHILE RIDING THE BIKE
Banana Seat <i>Easy Rider</i>	Your bike can carry a passenger. Once per day, if the Powered Character is your passenger, they regain up to 2 PT. (This cannot put them over their starting amount)
Basket <i>Organized Mess</i>	Once per day, you may reach into the basket and come up with a commonplace item.
Bell <i>Useful Ringing</i>	If you can explain, in narrative terms, how ringing the bell helps an ally during their check, they get +1 to that check.
First-Aid Kit <i>Bandages Ready</i>	Once per day, you may use this first-aid kit to help an ally recover from an injury (at GM's discretion).
Milk Crate <i>Big Hauler</i>	Your bike can carry a single large item. You must explain, in narrative terms, why your bike is outfitted to carry this item.
Pegs <i>Standing Room</i>	Your bike can carry a passenger. If you have a passenger, they receive the benefits of your bike's color as well.
Tassels <i>Getaway Ride</i>	You get +1 to all checks while being chased.
Ten Speeder <i>Lower Gear</i>	You may shift into a lower gear and pedal hard to add d4 to your Flight checks, but you suffer -1 to all Brawn and Grit checks until you can fully catch your breath.
Trading Cards <i>Loud Wheels</i>	You get +1 to checks if you are attempting to distract others.
Pedal-Powered Lights <i>Shining Rider</i>	You get +1 to all checks after dark.



K: ASPECTS FOR POWERED CHARACTERS

Fill in the Blanks - Good (d12 to randomize)

A physical skill they have is...

1. Lockpicking
2. Juggling
3. Card shuffling / deck manipulation
4. Sprinting
5. Parkour / free running
6. Can climb anything
7. Dancing (style)
8. Contortion
9. Incredible balance
10. Great aim with small objects
11. Great endurance
12. Video games of all kinds

They are incredibly good with...

1. Technology
2. Animals
3. Puzzles
4. The elderly
5. Public speaking
6. Organization
7. Timing
8. Predicting the weather
9. Plants
10. Guessing games
11. Difficult people
12. Young children

An intellectual skill they have is...

1. An eidetic memory
2. The ability to do complex calculations quickly
3. Calming down people who are upset
4. Life-like drawing
5. Lip reading
6. Pattern recognition
7. Perfect pitch
8. Reverse engineering devices
9. Reading people's expressions
10. Speed reading
11. Lucid dreaming
12. Uninhibited imagination

A virtue they seem to have is...

1. Compassion
2. Honesty
3. Patience
4. Benevolence
5. Courage
6. Loyalty
7. Gentleness
8. Ingenuity
9. Curiosity
10. Self-discipline
11. Objectivity
12. Insight OR humility

They seem to enjoy...

1. Desserts
2. Television
3. A specific genre of music
4. Loud noises
5. Asking questions
6. Shadow puppets
7. The outdoors
8. Abandoned buildings
9. Smell of lavender
10. Old books
11. High places
12. Being clean

They seem to know a lot about...

1. Religion
2. Conspiracy theories
3. Mechanics
4. The weather
5. Architecture
6. Psychology
7. Botany
8. Finding an object's weak points
9. Knitting
10. Small appliance repair
11. Politics
12. Economics

They insist that the group...

1. Stay together
2. Keep dangerous secrets
3. Check in with each other every day
4. Go into hiding
5. Build an awesome fort
6. Use passwords
7. Wear suits
8. Talk with their backs to each other
9. Sleepover regularly
10. Pretend nothing has changed
11. Come up with a team name and codenames
12. Start saving money, just in case

They want...

1. To find the source of their powers
2. To find their family
3. To return where they came from
4. To find treasure
5. To make friends with everyone
6. To discover their limits
7. To change the world
8. That which they cannot have
9. Greater variety in all things
10. To live forever
11. To be part of something much bigger than them
12. To be left to their own devices

Fill in the Blanks - Bad (d12 to randomize)

Incredibly bad with...

1. Following directions
2. Small talk
3. Technology
4. Animals
5. Adults
6. The elderly
7. Knowing when to stop talking
8. Organization
9. Timing
10. Stressful situations
11. Difficult people
12. Young children

A vice they seem to have is...

1. Laziness
2. Tactlessness
3. Dishonesty
4. Impatience
5. Cowardice
6. Recklessness
7. Envy
8. Naiveté
9. Stubbornness
10. Vanity
11. Shamelessness
12. Arrogance

They seem to fear...

1. The dark
2. Heights
3. Animals
4. A member of the group
5. An NPC
6. Water
7. Loud noises
8. Change
9. Small spaces
10. Confrontation
11. Being forgotten
12. Bugs and insects

They seem to detest...

1. A specific, seemingly innocuous location
2. An NPC the PCs also dislike
3. An NPC the PCs like
4. People in suits
5. Medical professionals
6. Televisions
7. Specific sounds
8. Specific smells
9. Most foods
10. Heat
11. Cold
12. Quiet

They seem to know nothing about...

1. Social norms
2. Languages
3. Geography
4. History
5. Technology
6. Fashion
7. Money
8. Sports
9. Television and movies
10. Current events
11. Cars
12. Literature

A seemingly irrational belief they have is that...

1. Birds aren't real
2. There are two parallel worlds that can be traversed
3. A secretive group is out to get them
4. Some people have been replaced with clones
5. A group is trying to destroy the town
6. A specific kind of safe food is poisonous
7. Radio or television is broadcasting subliminal messages
8. Aliens exist and have come to Earth
9. An event that the town remembers never occurred
10. A key event in the town's history was to cover up a dark truth
11. The perpetrator of a crime was framed
12. There is a plot to eliminate witnesses of an event

They seem to want to avoid...

1. Being alone
2. Going into buildings
3. Being with anyone other than the group
4. Telling other than the group anything
5. Talking to strangers
6. Pushing their limits
7. Taking responsibility
8. Seeming greedy
9. Change of any kind
10. Taking even moderate risks
11. Anyone interfering with their long-term plans
12. Finding out the truth about their past

A quirk they engage in frequently is...

1. Repeating themselves
2. Snapping their fingers
3. Stretching or yawning
4. Jogging in place
5. Whistling
6. Checking rooms for hiding spots
7. Tapping their fingers on flat surfaces
8. Twirling small objects between their fingers
9. Adjusting their clothes
10. Smelling new objects
11. Making sure items are in perfect working order
12. Wringing their hands

Group Related (put PC's name in blank)

1. They're highly protective of ____.
2. They ask ____ lots of questions.
3. They believe ____ is in danger.
4. They believe ____ is "the chosen one".
5. They value ____'s opinion over everyone else's.
6. They revere ____.
7. They actively ignore ____.
8. They distrust ____.
9. They will only talk to ____.
10. They love ____ (platonically or romantically) at first sight.
11. They think ____ is keeping a dangerous secret.
12. They feel ____ is always on their side.

Powers (flip a coin and roll d12 to randomize)

Heads

1. Alters probability
2. Astrally projects
3. Blocks others' senses
4. Communicates telepathically with people
5. Controls plants
6. Controls the elements
7. Creates false memories
8. Creates illusions
9. Knows an object's history by touching it
10. Moves faster than sight for tiny bursts
11. Sees confusing glimpses of the future
12. Teleports

Tails

1. Alters the flow of time
2. Becomes invisible
3. Communicates telepathically with animals
4. Controls gravity
5. Controls technology
6. Controls the weather
7. Creates forcefields
8. Heals others by touching them
9. Lifts more than any normal human could
10. Moves objects with their mind
11. Shapeshifts
12. Turns into a bike

KIDS ON BIKES

2ND EDITION

STATS

NAME: _____ TROPE: _____

AGE: _____ BIKE: _____

MOTIVATION: _____

FEAR: _____

FLAWS: _____

OBLIGATIONS: _____

KNACKS: _____

TROPE QUESTIONS: _____

DESCRIPTION: _____

FIGHT

FLIGHT

BRAINS

BRAWN

CHARM

GRIT

ADVERSITY TOKENS: _____

☐ COOL UNDER PRESSURE

☐ EASYGOING

☐ GROSS

☐ HEROIC

☐ INTUITIVE

☐ LOYAL

☐ LUCKY

☐ PREPARED

☐ PROTECTIVE

☐ QUICK HEALING

☐ REBELLIOUS

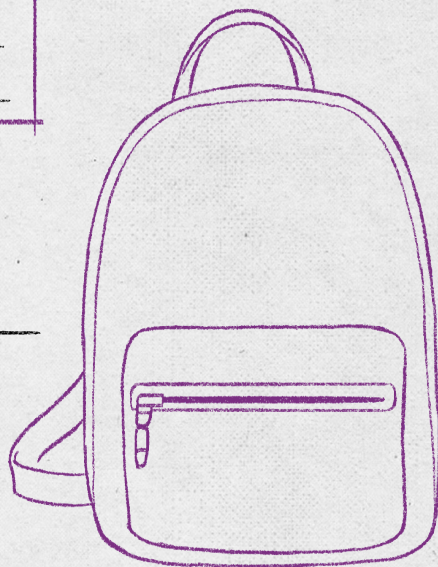
☐ SKILLED AT: _____

☐ TOUGH

☐ TREASURE HUNTER

☐ UNASSUMING

☐ WEALTHY



NOTES

CONSENT SHEET

☐ CRUSH

☐ DATE

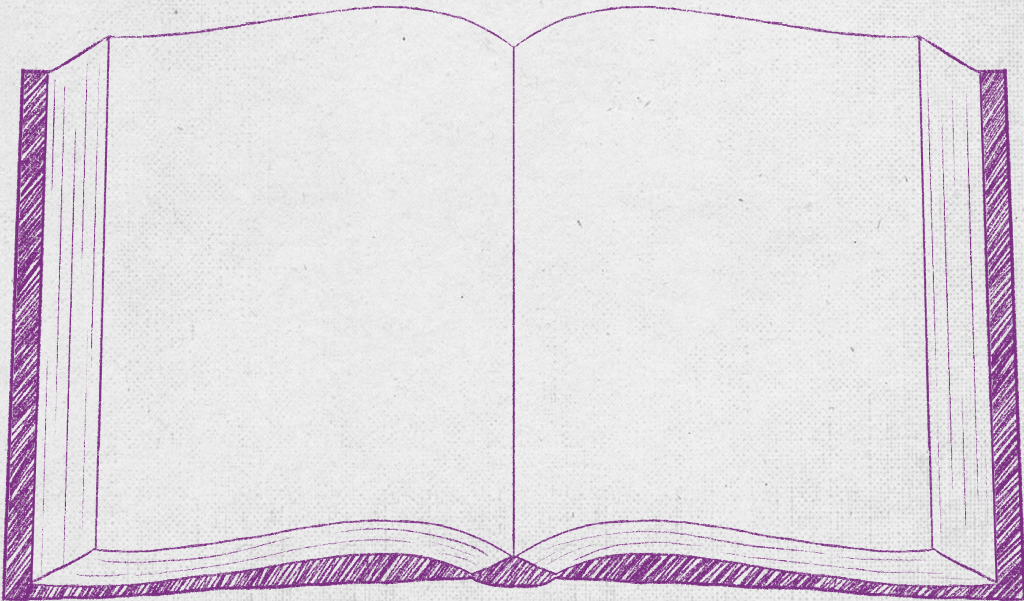
☐ PARTNER

☐ ON SCREEN INTIMACY

☐ OFF SCREEN INTIMACY

NOTES ON RELATIONSHIPS

CHARACTER THOUGHTS & NOTES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks for the second edition to:

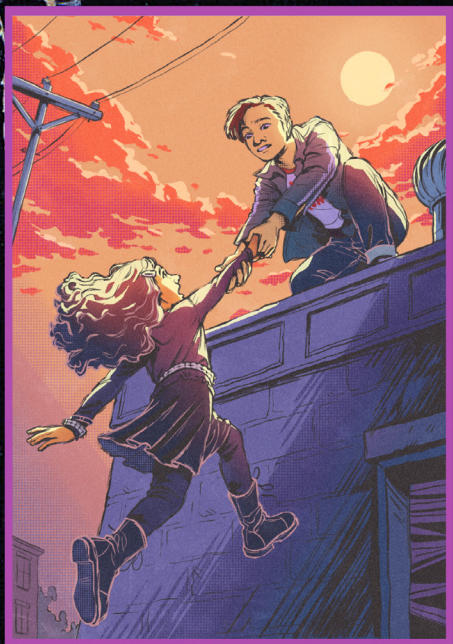
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Playtesters for the Second Edition:

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KIDS ON BIKES

2ND EDITION



The halls of the school are nearly silent. You try to keep your steps as small and controlled as possible. As you grip your flashlights tightly, the only noise you hear is the hum of circulating heat. Instinctively, you hold your breath as you approach an intersection. You don't know if you're alone in the building. With your backs pressed against the lockers closest to the intersection, you wait, listen. You think you hear breathing around the corner, but maybe it's your mind playing tricks on you. You hope it is...



In *Kids on Bikes*, you and your friends will play everyday people encountering strange, scary, and otherworldly forces that you can't comprehend, much less overpower. Working with – not against – the GM, you'll collaborate to tell your story. But in order to survive them, your characters will need to work together, use their strengths, and know when they have to run and hide.